SOME

PASSAGES

OF THE

LIFE & DEATH

Of the Right Honourable

JOHN

EARL of ROCHESTER,

Who died the 26th. of *July*, 1680.

Written by his own Direction on his Death-bed,

By *Gilbert Burnet*, D. D.

DUBLIN,

Reprinted by *Joseph Ray* at *College-Green*, for *William Winter* at the *Wandring Jew* in *Castle-street*, and *Eliphal Dobson* on *Cork-Hill*. MDCLXXXI.

THE PREFACE.

THE Celebrating the Praiſes of the Dead, is an Argument ſo worn out by long and frequent uſe; and now become ſo nauſeous, by the flattery that uſually attends it, that it is no wonder if Funeral Orations, or Panegiricks, are more conſidered for the Elegancy of Style, and fineneſs of Wit, than for the Authority they carry with them as to the truth of matters of Fact. And yet I am not hereby deterred from medling with this kind of Argument, nor from handling it with all the plainneſs I can: delivering only what I my ſelf heard and ſaw, without any borrowed Ornament. I do eaſily foreſee how many will be engaged for the ſupport of their Impious Maxims and Immoral Practices, to diſparage what I am to write. Others will cenſure it, becauſe it comes from one of my Profeſſion, too many ſuppoſing us to be induced, to frame ſuch Diſcourſes for carrying on what they are pleaſed to call Our Trade. *Some will think I dreſs it up too artificially, and others, that I preſent it too plain and naked.*

But being reſolved to govern my ſelf by the exact Rules of Truth; I ſhall be leſs concerned in the Cenſures I may fall under. It may ſeem liable to great Exception, that I ſhould diſcloſe ſo many things, that were diſcovered to me, if not under the Seal of Confeſſion, yet under the confidence of Friendſhip; But this Noble Lord himſelf not only releaſed me from all obligation of this kind, when I waited on

him in his laſt Sickneſs, a few days before he died, but gave it me in Charge not to ſpare him in any thing which I thought might be of uſe to the Living; and was not ill pleaſed to be laid open, as well in the worſt as in the beſt and laſt part of his Life, being ſo ſincere in his Repentance, that he was not unwilling to take ſhame to himſelf, by ſuffering his Faults to be expoſed for the benefit of others.

I write with one great diſadvantage, that I cannot reach his chief Deſign, without mentioning ſome of his Faults: But I have touched them as tenderly as the Occaſion would bear: and I am ſure with much more ſoftneſs than he deſired or would have conſented unto, had I told him how I intended to manage this part. I have related nothing with perſonal reflections on any others, concerned with him, wiſhing rather that they themſelves reflecting on the ſenſe he had of his former Diſorders, may be thereby led to forſake their own; than that they ſhould be any ways Reproach'd by what I write: and therefore though he uſed very few Reſerves with me, as to his courſe of Life, yet ſince others had a ſhare in moſt parts of it, I ſhall relate nothing but what more immediately concerned himſelf: and ſhall ſay no more of his Faults, than is neceſſary to illuſtrate his Repentance.

The Occaſion that led me into ſo particular a knowledge of him, was an intimation given me by a Gentleman of his acquaintance, of his deſire to ſee me. This was ſometime in October, 1679. *when he was ſlowly recovering out of a great Diſeaſe. He had underſtood that I often attended on one well known to him, that died the Summer before; He was alſo then entertaining himſelf in that low ſtate of his health, with the firſt part of the* Hiſtory of the Reformation *then newly come out, with which he ſeemed not ill pleaſed: and we had accidentally met in two or three places ſometime before. Theſe were the Motives that led him to call for my Company. After I had waited on him once or twice, he grew into that freedom with me, as to open to me all his thoughts, both of Religion and Morality: and to give me a full view of his paſt life: and ſeemed not uneaſie at my frequent Viſits. So till he went from* London,

don, *which was in the beginning of* April, *I waited on him often. As soon as I heard how ill he was, and how much he was touched with the sense of his former life, I writ to him, and received from him an Answer, that, without my knowledge, was Printed since his Death; from a Copy which one of his Servants conveyed to the* Press. *In it there is so undeserved a Value put on me, that it had been very indecent for me to have publisht it: Yet that must be attributed to his Civility and way of breeding; and indeed he was particularly known to so few of the Clergie, that the good Opinion he had of me, is to be imputed only to his unacquaintance with others.*

My end of Writing is so to discharge the last Commands this Lord left on me, as that it may be effectual to awaken those who run on to all the excesses of Riot; and that in the midst of those heats, which their Lusts and Passions raise in them they may be a little wrought on by so great an Instance, of One who had run round the whole Circle of Luxury; *and as* Solomon *says of himself,* Whatsoever his Eyes desired, he kept it not from them; and withheld his Heart from no Joy. But *when he looked back on all that on which he had wasted his Time and Strength, he esteemed it* Vanity and Vexation of Spirit: *though he had both as much natural Wit, and as much acquired by Learning, and both as much improved with thinking and study, as perhaps any Libertine of the Age. Yet when he reflected on all his former Courses, even before his Mind was illuminated with better thoughts, he counted them madness and folly. But when the Powers of Religion came to operate on him, then he added a detestation to the Contempt he formerly had of them, suitable to what became a sincere Penitent, and expressed himself in so clear and so calm a manner, so sensible of his Failings towards his Maker and his Redeemer, that as it wrought not a little on those that were about him; So I hope, the making it Publick may have a more general Influence, chiefly on those on whom his former Conversation might have had ill Effects.*

I have endeavoured to give his Character as fully as I could

take

take it: for I who saw him only in one light, in a sedate and quiet temper, when he was under a great decay of Strength and loss of Spirits, cannot give his Picture with that life and advantage that others may, who knew him when his Parts were more bright and lively: Yet the Composure he was then in, may perhaps be supposed to ballance any abatement of his usual Vigour which the declination of his Health brought him under. I have written this Discourse with as much Care, and have considered it as narrowly as I could. I am sure I have said nothing but Truth; I have done it slowly, and often used my second thoughts in it, not being so much concerned in the Censures might fall on my self, as Cautious that nothing should pass, that might obstruct my only design of writing, which is the doing what I can towards the reforming a loose and lewd Age. And if such a Signal Instance concurring with all the Evidence that we have for our most holy Faith, has no effect on those who are running the same Course, it is much to be feared they are given up to a reprobate Sense.

SOME

SOME PASSAGES

Of the LIFE and DEATH OF JOHN Earl of *ROCHESTER*.

John Wilmot Earl of *Rocheſter* was born in *April, Anno Dom.* 1648. his Father was *Henry* Earl of *Rocheſter*, but beſt known by the Title of the Lord *Wilmot*, who bore ſo great a part in all the late Wars, that mention is often made of him in the Hiſtory: And had the chief ſhare in the Honour of the preſervation of his Majeſty that now Reigns, after *Worceſter* Fight, and the Conveying him from Place to Place, till he happily eſcaped into *France*: But dying before the King's Return, he left his Son little other Inheritance but the Honour and Title derived to him with the pretenſions ſuch eminent Services gave him to the Kings favour: Theſe were careſully managed by the great prudence and diſcretion of his Mother, a Daughter of that Noble and ancient Family of the *St. Johns* of *Wiltſhire*, ſo that his Education was carried on in all things ſutably to his Quality.

When

When he was at School he was an extraordinary Proficient at his Book: and those shining parts which have since appeared with so much lustre; began then to shew themselves: He acquired the *Latin* to such perfection, that to his dying-day he retained a great relish of the fineness and Beauty of that Tongue: and was exactly versed in the incomparable Authours that writ about *Augustus*'s time, whom he read often with that peculiar delight which the greatest Wits have ever found in those Studies.

When he went to the *University* the General Joy which over-ran the whole Nation upon his Majesties Restauration, but was not regulated with that Sobriety and Temperance, that became a serious gratitude to God for so great a Blessing, produced some of it's ill effects on him: He began to love these disorders too much; His Tutor was that Eminent and Pious Divine Dr. *Blanford*, afterwards promoted to the Sees of *Oxford* and *Worcester*: And under his Inspection, he was committed to the more immediate care of Mr. *Phineas Berry*, a Fellow of *Wadham* Colledge, a very learned and good natured man; whom he afterwards ever used with much respect, and rewarded him as became a great man. But the humour of that time wrought so much on him, that he broke off the Course of his Studies; to which no means could ever effectually recall him; till when he was in *Italy* his Governour Dr. *Balfour* a learned and worthy man, now a Celebrated Physitian in *Scotland* his Native Country; drew him to read such Books, as were most likely to bring him back to love Learning and Study: and often acknowledged to me, in particular three days before his Death, how much he was obliged to Love and Honour this his Governour, to whom he thought he owed more than to all the World, next after his Parents, for his great Fidelity and Care of him, while he was under his trust. But no part of it affected him more sensible, than that he engaged him by many tricks (so he expressed it) to delight in Books and reading; So that ever after he took occasion in the Intervals of those woful Extravagances that consumed most of his time to read much: and though the time was generally but indifferently employed, for the choice of the Subjects of his Studies was not

not always good, yet the habitual Love of knowledge together with theſe fits of ſtudy, had much awakened his underſtanding, and prepared him for better things, when his mind ſhould be ſo far changed as to relliſh them.

He came from his Travels in the 18*th.* Year of his Age, and appeared at Court with as great Advantage as moſt ever had. He was a Graceful and wel-ſhaped perſon, tall and well made, if not a little too ſlender: He was exactly well bread, and what by a modeſt behaviour natural to him, what by a Civility become almoſt as natural, his Converſation was eaſie and obliging. He had a ſtrange Vivacity of thought, and vigour of expreſſion: His Wit had a ſubtility and ſublimity both, that were ſcarce imitable. His Stile was clear and ſtrong: When he uſed Figures they were very lively, and yet far enough out of the Common Road; He had made himſelf Maſter of the Antient and Modern Wit, and of the Modern *French* and *Italian* as well as the *Engliſh*. He loved to talk and write of Speculative Matters, and did it with ſo fine a thread, that even thoſe who hated the Subjects that his Fancy ran upon, yet could not but be charmed with his way of treating of them. *Boileau* among the *French*, and *Cowley* among the *Engliſh* Wits, were thoſe he admired moſt. Sometimes other mens thoughts mixed with his Compoſures, but that flowed rather from the Impreſſions they made on him when he read them, by which they came to return upon him as his own thoughts; than that he ſervilely copied from any. For few men ever had a boulder flight of fancy, more ſteddily governed by Judgment than he had. No wonder a young man ſo made, and ſo improved was very acceptable in a Court.

Soon after his coming thither he laid hold on the firſt Occaſion that offered to ſhew his readineſs to hazard his life in the Defence and Service of his Country. In *Winter* 1665. he went with the Earl of *Sandwich* to Sea, when he was ſent to lie for the *Dutch Eaſt-India Fleet* and was in the *Revenge*, Commanded by Sir *Thomas Tiddiman*, when the Attack was made on the Port of *Bergen* in *Norway*, the *Dutch* Ships having got into that *Port*. It was as deſperate an Attempt as ever was made: during the whole Action the Earl of

Rocheſter ſhewed as brave and as reſolute a Courage as was poſſible: A Perſon of Honour told me he heard the Lord *Clifford*, who was in the ſame Ship, often magnifie his Courage at that time very highly. Nor did the Rigours of the Seaſon, the hardneſs of the Voyage, and the extream danger he had been in, deter him from running the like on the very next Occaſion; For the *Summer* following he went to Sea again, without communicating his deſign to his neareſt Relations. He went aboard the Ship Commanded by Sir *Edward Spragge* the day before the great Sea-fight of that Year: Almoſt all the Volunteers that were in the ſame Ship were killed. Mr. *Middleton* (brother to Sir *Hugh Middleton*) was ſhot in his Arms. During the Action, Sir *Edward Spragge* not being ſatisfied with the behaviour of one of the Captains could not eaſily find a Perſon that would chearfully venture through ſo much danger, to carry his Commands to that Captain. This Lord offered himſelf to the Service; and went in a little Boat through all the ſhot, and delivered his Meſſage, and returned back to Sir *Edward*; which was much commended by all that ſaw it. He thought it neceſſary to begin his life with theſe Demonſtrations of his Courage in an Element and way of fighting, which is acknowledged to be the greateſt tryal of clear and undaunted Valour.

He had ſo entirely laid down the Intemperance that was growing on him before his Travels, that at his Return he hated nothing more. But falling into company that loved theſe Exceſſes, he was, though not without difficulty, and by many ſteps, brought back to it again. And the natural heat of his fancy, being inflamed by Wine, made him ſo extravagantly pleaſant, that many to be more diverted by that humor ſtudied to engage him deeper and deeper in Intemperance: which at length did ſo entirely ſubdue him; that, as he told me, for five years together he was continually Drunk: not all the while under the viſible effect of it, but his blood was ſo inflamed, that he was not in all that time cool enough to be perfectly Maſter of himſelf. This led him to ſay and do many wild and unaccountable things: By this, he ſaid, he had broke the firm conſtitution of his health, that ſeemed ſo ſtrong,

that

that nothing was too hard for it; and he had ſuffered ſo much in his Reputation, that he almoſt diſpaired to recover it. There were two principles in his natural temper, that being heighten'd by that heat carryed him to great exceſſes: a violent love of Pleaſure, and a diſpoſition to extravagant Mirth. The one involved him in great ſenſuality: the other led him to many odd Adventures and Frolicks, in which he was oft in hazard of his Life. The one being the ſame irregular appetite in his Mind, that the other was in his Body, which made him think nothing diverting that was not extravagant. And though in cold blood he was a generous and good natured man, yet he would go far in his heats, after any thing that might turn to a Jeſt or matter of Diverſion: He ſaid to me, He never improved his Intereſt at Court, to do a premeditate Miſchief to other perſons. Yet he laid out his Wit very freely in *Libels* and *Satyrs*, in which he had a peculiar Talent of mixing his Wit with his Malice, and fitting both with ſuch apt words, that Men were tempted to be pleaſed with them: from thence his Compoſures came to be eaſily known, for few had ſuch a way of tempering theſe together as he had; So that when any thing extraordinary that way came out, as a Child is fathered ſometimes by its Reſemblance, ſo was it laid at his Door as its Parent and Author.

Theſe exerciſes in the Courſe of his life were not always equally pleaſant to him; he had often ſad Intervals and ſevere Reflections on them: and though then he had not theſe awakened in him from any deep Principle of Religion, yet the horrour that Nature raiſed in him, eſpecially in ſome Sickneſſes, made him too eaſie to receive ſome ill Principles, which others endeavoured to poſſeſs him with; ſo that he was too ſoon brought to ſet himſelf to ſecure, and fortifie his Mind againſt that, by diſpoſſeſſing it all he could of the belief or apprehenſions of Religion. The Licentiouſneſs of his temper, with the briskneſs of his Wit, diſpoſed him to love the Converſation of thoſe who divided their time between lewd Actions and irregular Mirth. And ſo he came to bend his Wit, and direct his Studies and Endeavours to ſupport and ſtrengthen theſe ill Principles both in himſelf and others.

An accident fell out after this, which confirmed him more in these Courses: when he went to Sea in the Year 1665, there happened to be in the same Ship with him Mr. *Mountague* and another Gentleman of Quality, these two, the former especially, seemed perswaded that they should never return into *England*. Mr. *Mountague* said, He was sure of it: the other was not so positive. The Earl of *Rochester*, and the last of these, entred into a formal Engagement, not without Ceremonies of Religion, that if either of them died, he should appear, and give the other notice of the future State, if there was any. But Mr. *Mountague* would not enter into the Bond. When the day came that they thought to have taken the *Dutch*-Fleet in the Port of *Bergen*. Mr. *Mountague* though he had such a strong Presage in his mind of his approaching death, yet he generously staid all the while in the place of greatest danger: The other Gentleman signalized his Courage in a most undaunted manner, till near the end of the Action; when he fell on a sudden into such a trembling that he could scarce stand: and Mr. *Mountague* going to him to hold him up, as they were in each others Arms a Cannon Ball killed him outright, and carried away Mr. *Mountague*'s Belly, so that he died within an hour after. The Earl of *Rochester* told me that these presages they had in their minds made some impression on him, that there were separated Beings: and that the Soul either by a natural sagacity, or some secret Notice communicated to it, had a sort of Divination: But that Gentlemans never appearing was a great snare to him, during the rest of his life. Though when he told me this, he could not but acknowledge, it was an unreasonable thing for him, to think, that Beings in another State were not under such Laws and Limits, that they could not command their own motions, but as the Supream Power should order them: andthat one who had so corrupted the Natural Principles of Truth, as he had, had no reason to expect that such an extraordinary thing should be done for his Conviction.

He told me of another odd Presage that one had of his approaching Death in the Lady *Warre*, his Mother in Laws house: The Chaplain had dream'd that such a day he should die, but being by all

all the Family put out of the belief of it, he had almoſt forgot it: till the Evening before at Supper, there being Thirteen at Table; according to a fond conceit that one of theſe muſt ſoon die, One of the young Ladies pointed to him, that he was to die. He remembring his Dream fell into ſome diſorder, and the Lady *Warre* reproving him for his Superſtition, he ſaid, He was confident he was to die before Morning, but he being in perfect health, it was not much minded. It was *Saturday*-Night, and he was to Preach next day. He went to his Chamber and ſate up late, as appeared by the burning of his Candle, and he had been preparing his Notes for his Sermon, but was found dead in his Bed the next Morning: Theſe things he ſaid made him inclined to believe, the Soul was a ſubſtance diſtinct from matter: and this often returned into his thoughts. But that which perfected his perſwaſion about it, was, that in the Sickneſs which brought him ſo near death before I firſt knew him, when his Spirits were ſo low and ſpent, that he could not move nor ſtir, and he did not think to live an hour; He ſaid, His reaſon and Judgment were ſo clear and ſtrong, that from thence he was fully perſwaded that Death was not the ſpending or diſſolution of the Soul; but only the ſeparation of it from matter. He had in that Sickneſs great Remorſes for his paſt Life, but he afterwards told me, They were rather general and dark Horrours, than any Convictions of ſinning againſt God. He was ſorry he had lived ſo as to waſt his ſtrength ſo ſoon, or that he had brought ſuch an ill name upon himſelf, and had an Agony in his Mind about it, which he knew not well how to expreſs: But at ſuch times, though he complied with his Friends in ſuffering Divines to be ſent for, he ſaid, He had no great mind to it; and that it was but a piece of his breeding, to deſire them to pray by him, in which he joyned little himſelf.

As to the Supream Being, he had always ſome Impreſſion of one: and profeſſed often to me, That he had never kown an entire *Atheiſt*, who fully believed there was no God. Yet when he explained his Notion of this Being, it amounted to no more than a vaſt power, that had none of the Attributes of Goodneſs or Juſtice,

Justice, we ascribe to the Deity: These were his thoughts about Religion, as himself told me. For Morality, he freely own'd to me, that though he talked of it, as a fine thing, yet this was onely because he thought it a decent way of speaking, and that as they went always in Cloaths, though in their Frollicks they would have chosen sometimes to have gone naked, if they had not feared the people: So though some of them found it necessary for humane life to talke of Morality, yet he confessed they cared not for it, further then the reputation of it was necessary for their credit, and affairs: of which he gave me many Instances, as their professing and swearing Friendship, where they hated mortally; their Oaths and Imprications in their Addresses to Women which they intended never to make good; the pleasure they took in defaming innocent Persons, and spreading false Reports of some, perhaps in Revenge, because they could not engage them to comply with their ill Designs: The delight they had in making people quarrel; their unjust usage of their Creditors, and putting them off by any deceitful Promise they could invent, that might deliver them from present Importunity. So that in detestation of these Courses he would often brake forth into such hard Expressions concerning himself as would be indecent for another to repeat.

Such had been his Principles and Practices in a Course of many years which had almost quite extinguish't the natural Propensities in him to Justice and Vertue: He would often go into the Country, and be for some months wholly imployed in Study, or the Sallies of his Wit: Which he came to direct chiefly to *Satyre*. And this he often defended to me; by saying there were some people that could not be kept in Order, or admonished but in this way. I replied, That it might be granted that a grave way of *Satyre* was sometimes no improfitable way of Reproof. Yet they who used it only out of spite, and mixed Lyes with Truth, sparing nothing that might adorn their *Poems*, or gratifie their Revenge, could not excuse that way of Reproach, by which the Innocent often suffer: since the most malicious things, if wittily expressed, might stick to and blemish the best men in the World, and the malice of

a Libel could hardly consist with the Charity of an Admonition. To this he answered, A man could not write with Life, unless he were heated by Revenge: For to make a *Satyre* without Resentments, upon the cold Notions of *Philosophy*, was as if a man would in cold blood, cut mens throats who had never offended him: And he said, The lyes in these Libels came often in as Ornaments that could not be spared without spoiling the beauty of the *Poem*.

For his other Studies, they were divided between the Comical and witty Writings of the Antient and Moderns, the *Roman* Authors, and Books of Physick: which the ill state of health he was fallen into, made more necessary to himself: and which qualifi'd him for an odd adventure, which I shall but just mention. Being under an unlucky Accident, which obliged him to keep out of the way; He disguised himself, so that his neareſt Friends could not have known him, and set up in *Tower-street* for an *Italian Mountebank*, where he practised Physick for some Weeks not without success. In his later years, he read Books of History more. He took pleasure to disguise himself, as a *Porter*, or as a *Begger*; sometimes to follow some mean Amours, which, for the vareity of them he affected; At other times, meerly for diversion, he would go about in odd shapes, in which he acted his part so naturally, that even those who were on the secret, and saw him in these shapes, could perceive nothing by which he might be discovered.

I have now made the Description of his former Life, and Principles, as fully as I thought necessary, to answer my End in Writing: And yet with those reserves, that I hope I have given no just cause of offence to any. I have said nothing but what I had from his own mouth, and have avoided the mentioning of the more particular passages of his life, of which he told me not a few: But since others were concerned in them, whose good only I design, I will say nothing that may either provoke or blemish them. It is their Reformation, and not their Disgrace, I desire. This tender consideration of others has made me suppress many remarkable and useful things, he told me: But finding that though

I ſhould name none yet I muſt at leaſt Relate ſuch Circumſtances, as would give too great Occaſion for the *Reader* to conjecture concerning the Perſons intended, right or wrong, either of which were inconvenient enough, I have choſen to paſs them quite over. But I hope thoſe that know how much they were engaged with him in his ill Courſes, will be ſomewhat touched with this tenderneſs I expreſs towards them: and be thereby the rather induced to reflect on their Ways, and to conſider without prejudice or paſſion what ſenſe this Noble Lord had of their caſe, when he came at laſt ſeriouſly to reflect upon his own.

I now turn to thoſe parts of this *Narrative*, wherein I my ſelf bore ſome ſhare, and which I am to deliver upon the Obſervations I made after a long and free Converſation with him for ſome months. I was not long in his Company, when he told me, He ſhould treat me with more freedom than he had ever uſed to men of my Profeſſion. He would conceal none of his Principles from me, but lay his thoughts open without any diſguiſe; nor would he do it to maintain Debate, or ſhew his Wit, but plainly tell me what ſtuck with him; and proteſted to me, That he was not ſo engaged to his old Maxims, as to reſolve not to change, but that if he could be convinced he would chooſe rather to be of another mind; He ſaid, He would impartially Weigh what I ſhould lay before him, and tell me freely when it did convince him, and when it did not. He expreſſed this diſpoſition of mind to me in a manner ſo frank, that I could not but believe him, and be much taken with his way, of diſcourſe: So we entred into almoſt all the parts of Natural and Revealed Religion, and of Morality. He ſeemed pleaſed, and in a great meaſure ſatisfied, with what I ſaid upon many of theſe Heads: And though our freeſt Converſation was when we were alone, yet upon ſeveral Occaſions, other perſons were Witneſſes to it. I underſtood from many hands that my Company was not diſtaſtful to him, and that the Subjects about which we talked moſt were not unacceptable: and he expreſſed himſelf often, not ill pleaſed with many things I ſaid to him, and particularly when I viſited him in his laſt Sickneſs, ſo that I hope it may not be altogether unprofitable

ſitable to publiſh the ſubſtance of thoſe matters about which We argued ſo freely, with our reaſoning upon them: And perhaps what had ſome effects on him, may be not altogether ineffectual upon others. I followed him with ſuch Arguments as I ſaw were moſt likely to prevail with him: and my not urging other Reaſons, proceeded not from any diſtruſt I had of their force, but from the neceſſity of uſing thoſe that were moſt proper for him. He was then in a low ſtate of health, and ſeemed to be ſlowly recovering of a great Diſeaſe: He was in the Milk-Diet, and apt to fall into Hectical-Fits; any accident weakned him; ſo that he thought he could not live long; And when he went from *London*, he ſaid, He believed he ſhould never come to Town more. Yet during his being in Town he was ſo well, that he went often abroad, and had great Vivacity of Spirit. So that he was under no ſuch decay, as either darkened or weakned his Underſtanding; Nor was he any way troubled with the Spleen, or Vapours, or under the power of Melancholy. What he was then, compared to what he had been formerly, I could not ſo well judge, who had ſeen him but twice before. Others have told me they perceived no difference in his parts. This I mention more particularly, that it may not be thought that Melancholy, or the want of Spirits, made him more inclined to receive any Impreſſions: for indeed I never diſcovered any ſuch thing in him.

Having thus opened the way to the Heads of our Diſcourſe, I ſhall next mention them. The *three* chief things We talked about, were *Morality*, *Natural Religion* and *Revealed Religion*, *Chriſtianity* in particular. For *Morality*, he confeſſed, He ſaw the neceſſity of it, both for the Government of the World, and for the preſervation of Health, Life and Friendſhip: and was very much aſhamed of his former Practices, rather becauſe he had made himſelf a Beaſt, and had brought pain and ſickneſs on his Body, and had ſuffered much in his Reputation, than from any deep ſenſe of a Supream Being, or another State: But So far this went with him, that he reſolved

firmly to change the Courſe of his Life; which he thought he ſhould effect by the Study of *Philoſophy*, and had not a few no leſs ſolid than pleaſant Notions concerning the folly and madneſs of Vice: but he confeſſed he had no remorſe for his paſt Actions, as Offences againſt God, but only as Injuries to himſelf and to Mankind.

Upon this Subject I ſhewed him the Defects of *Philoſophy*, for reforming the World: That it was a matter of Speculation, which but few either had the leiſure, or the capacity to enquire into. But the Principle that muſt reform Mankind, muſt be obvious to every Mans Underſtaning. That *Philoſophy* in matters of Morality, beyond the great lines of our Duty, had no very certain fixed Rule, but in the leſſer Offices and Inſtances of our Duty went much by the Fancies of Men, and Cuſtoms of Nations; and conſequently could not have Authority enough to bear down the Propenſities of Nature, Appetite or Paſſion: For which I inſtanced in theſe two Points; The *One* was about that *Maxim* of the *Stoicks*, to extirpate all ſort of Paſſion and concern for any thing. That, take it by one hand, ſeemed deſireable, becauſe if it could be accompliſh'd, it would make all the accidents of life eaſie; but I think it cannot, becauſe Nature after all our ſtriving againſt it, will ſtill return to it ſelf: Yet on the other hand it diſſolved the Bonds of Nature and Friendſhip, and ſlackened Induſtry which will move but dully, without an inward heat: And if it delivered a man from many Troubles, it deprived him, of the chief pleaſures of Life, which riſe from Friendſhip. The *other* was concerning the reſtraint of pleaſure, how far that was to go. Upon this he told me the two *Maxims* of his *Morality* then were, that he ſhould do nothing to the hurt of any other, or that might prejudice his own health: And he thought that all pleaſure, when it did not interfere with theſe, was to be indulged as the gratification of our natural Appetites. It ſeemed unreaſonable to imagine theſe were put into a man only to be reſtrained, or curbed to ſuch a narrowneſs; This he applied to the free uſe of Wine and Women.

To this I answered, That if Appetites being natural, was an Argument for the indulging them; then the revengeful might as well alledge it for Murder, and the Covetous for stealing; whose Appetites are no less keen on those Objects; and yet it is acknowledg'd that these Appetites ought to be curb'd. If the difference is urged from the Injury that another Person receives, the Injury is as great, if a Mans Wife is defiled, or his Daughter corrupted: and it is impossible for a man to let his Appetites loose to Vagrant Lusts, and not to transgress in these particulars: So there was no curing the Disorders, that must rise from thence, but by regulating these Appetites: And why should we not as well think that God intended our bruitish and sensual Appetites should be governed by our Reason, as that the fierceness of Beasts should be managed and tamed, by the Wisdom, and for the use of Man? So that it is no real absurdity to grant that Appetites were put into Men, on purpose to exercise their Reason in the Restraint and Government of them: which to be able to do, ministers a higher and more lasting pleasure to a Man, than to give them their full scope and range. And if other Rules of *Philosophy* be observed, such as the avoiding those Objects that stir Passion; Nothing raises higher Passions than ungovern'd Lust, nothing darkens the Understanding, and depresses a mans mind more, nor is any thing managed with more frequent Returns of other Immoralities, such as Oaths and Imprecations which are only intended to compass what is desired: The expence that is necessary to maintain these Irregularities makes a man false in his other dealings. All this he freely confesseth was true, Upon which I urged, that if it was reasonable for a man to regulate his Appetite in things which he knew were hurtful to him; Was it not as reasonable for God to prescribe a regulating of those Appetites, whose unrestrained Course did produce such mischievous effects. That it could not be denied, but doing to others what we would have others do unto us, was a just Rule: Those men then that knew how extream sensible they themselves would be of the dishonour of their

Families in the case of their Wives or Daughters, must needs condemn themselves, for doing that which they could not bear from another: And if the peace of Mankind, and the entire satisfaction of our whole life, ought to be one of the chief measures of our Actions; then let all the World judge, Whether a Man that confines his Appetite, and lives contented at home, is not much happier, than those that let their Desires run after forbidden Objects. The thing being granted to be better in it self, than the question falls between the restraint of Appetite in some instances, and the freedom of a mans thoughts, the soundness of his health, his application to Affairs, with the easiness of his whole life. Whether the one is not to be done before the other? As to the difficulty of such a restraint, though it is not easie to be done, when a man allows himself many liberties, in which it is not possible to stop; Yet those who avoid the Occasions that may kindle these impure Flames, and keep themselves well employed, find the Victory and Dominion over them no such impossible, or hard matter, as may seem at first view. So that though the *Philosophy* and *Morality* of this Point were plain; Yet there is not strength enough in that Principle to subdue Nature, and Appetite. Upon this I urged, that *Morality* could not be a strong thing, unless a man were determined by a Law within himself: for if he only measured himself by Decency, or the Laws of the Land, this would teach him only to use such caution in his ill Practices, that they should not brake out too visible: but would never carry him to an inward and universal probity: That Vertue was of so complicated a Nature, that unless a man came entirely within its discipline, he could not adhere stedfastly to any one Precept: for Vices are often made necessary supports to one another. That this cannot be done, either steddily, or with any satisfaction, unless the Mind does inwardly comply with, and delight in the Dictates of Virtue. And that could not be effected, except a mans nature were internally regenerated, and changed by a higher Principle: Till that came about, corrupt Nature would be strong, and *Philosophy* but

but feeble: eſpecially when it ſtruggled with ſuch Appetites or Paſſions as were much kindled, or deeply rooted in the Conſtitution of ones Body. This, he ſaid, ſounded to him like *Enthuſiaſm*, or *Canting:* He had no notion of it, and ſo could not underſtand it: He comprehended the Dictates of *Reaſon* and *Philoſophy*, in which as the Mind became much converſant, there would ſoon follow as he believed, a greater eaſineſs in obeying its precepts: I told him on the other hand that all his Speculations of *Philoſophy* would not ſerve him in any ſtead, to the reforming of his Nature and Life, till he applied himſelf to God for inward aſſiſtances. It was certain, that the Impreſſions made in his Reaſon governed him, as they were lively preſented to him: but theſe are ſo apt to ſlip out of our Memory, and we ſo apt to turn our thoughts from them, and at ſometimes the contrary Impreſſions are ſo ſtrong, that let a man ſet up a reaſoning in his Mind againſt them, he finds that Celebrated ſaying of the Poet,

Video meliora proboq; deteriora ſequor.

I ſee what is better and approve it: but follow what is worſe.

to be all that *Philoſophy* will amount to. Whereas thoſe who upon ſuch Occaſions apply themſelves to God, by earneſt Prayer, feel a diſengagement from ſuch Impreſſions, and themſelves endued with a power to reſiſt them. So that thoſe bonds which formerly held them, fall off.

This he ſaid muſt be the effect of a heat in Nature, it was only the ſtrong diverſion of the Thoughts, that gave the ſeeming Victory, and he did not doubt but if one could turn to a *Problem* in *Euclid*, or to Write a Copy of Verſes, it would have the ſame effect. To this I anſwered, That if ſuch Methods did only divert the Thoughts, there might be ſome force in what he ſaid: but if they not only drove out ſuch Inclinations, but begat Impreſſions contrary to them, and brought men into a new diſpoſition and habit of mind; then he muſt confeſs there was ſomewhat more than a diverſion, in theſe changes, which were brought on our minds by true Devotion. I added that Reaſon and Experience

rience were the things that determined our perſwaſions: that Experience without Reaſon may be thought the deluſion of our Fancy, ſo Reaſon without Experience had not ſo convincing an Operation: But theſe two meeting together, muſt needs give a man all the ſatisfaction he can deſire. He could not ſay, it was unreaſonable to believe that the Supream Being might make ſome thoughts ſtir in our Minds with more or leſs force, as it pleaſed: Eſpecially the force of theſe motions, being, for moſt part, according to the Impreſſion that was made on our Brains: which that power that directed the whole frame of Nature, could make grow deeper as it pleaſed. It was alſo reaſonable to ſuppoſe God a Being of ſuch goodneſs that he would give his aſſiſtance to ſuch as deſired it: For though he might upon ſome greater Occaſions in an extraordinary manner turn ſome peoples minds; Yet ſince he had endued Man with a faculty of Reaſon, it is fit that men ſhould employ that, as far as they could; and beg his aſſiſtance: which certainly they can do. All this ſeemed reaſonable, and at leaſt probable: Now good men who felt upon their frequent Applications to God in Prayer, a freedom from thoſe ill Impreſſions, that formerly ſubdued them, an inward love to Vertue and true Goodneſs, an eaſineſs and delight in all the parts of Holineſs, which was fed and cheriſhed in them by a ſeriouſneſs in Prayer, and did languish as that went off, had as real a perception of an inward ſtrength in their Minds, that did riſe and fall with true Devotion, as they perceived the ſtrength of their Bodies increaſed or abated, according as they had or wanted good nouriſhment.

After many Diſcourſes upon this Subject, he ſtill continued to think all was the effect of Fancy: He ſaid, That he underſtood nothing of it, but acknowledged that he thought they were very happy whoſe Fancies were under the power of ſuch Impreſſions? ſince they had ſomewhat on which their thoughts reſted and centred: But when I ſaw him in his laſt Sickneſs, he then told me, He had another ſenſe of what we had talked concerning Prayer and inward aſſiſtances.

This

This Subject led us to diſcourſe of God, and of the Notion of Religion in general. He believed there was a Supream Being: He could not think the World was made by chance, and the regular Courſe of Nature ſeemed to demonſtrate the Eternal Power of its Author. This, he ſaid, he could never ſhake off; but when he came to explain his Notion of the Deity, he ſaid, He looked on it as a vaſt Power that wrought every thing by the neceſſity of its Nature: and thought that God had none of thoſe Affections of Love or Hatred, which breed perturbation in us, and by conſequence he could not ſee that there was to be either Reward or Puniſhment. He thought our Conceptions of God were ſo low, that we had better not think much of him: And to love God ſeemed to him a preſumptuous thing, and the heat of fanciful men. Therefore he believed there ſhould be no other Religious Worship, but a general Celebration of that Being, in ſome ſhort Hymn: All the other parts of Worſhip he eſteemed the Inventions of Prieſts, to make the World believe they had a Secret of Incenſing and Appeaſing God as they pleaſed. In a word, he was neither perſwaded that there was a ſpecial Providence about humane Affairs; Nor that Prayers were of much uſe, ſince that was to look on God as a weak Being, that would be overcome with Importunities. And for the ſtate after death, though he thought the Soul did not diſſolve at death; Yet he doubted much of Rewards or Puniſhments: the one he thought too high for us to attain, by our ſlight Services; and the other was too extream to be inflicted for Sin. This was the ſubſtance of his Speculations about God and Religion.

I told him his Notion of God was ſo low, that the Supream Being ſeemed to be nothing but Nature, For if that Being had no freedom, nor choice of its own Actions, nor operated by Wiſdom or Goodneſs, all thoſe Reaſons which led him to acknowledge a God, were contrary to this Conceit; for if the Order of the Univerſe perſwaded him to think there was a God, He muſt at the ſame time conceive him to be both Wiſe and Good, as well as Powerful, ſince theſe all appear'd equally in the

the Creation; though his Wiſdom and Goodneſs had ways of exerting themſelves, that were far beyond our Notions or Meaſures. If God Was wiſe and Good, he would naturally love, and be pleaſed with thoſe that reſembled him in theſe Perfections, and diſlike thoſe that were oppoſite to him. Every Rational Being naturally loves it ſelf, and is delighted in others like it ſelf, and is averſe from what is not ſo. Truth is a Rational Natures acting in conformity to it ſelf in all things, and Goodneſs is an Inclination to promote the happineſs of other Beings: So Truth and Goodneſs were the eſſential perfections of every reaſonable Being, and certainly moſt eminently in the Deity: nor does his Mercy or Love raiſe paſſion or perturbation in Him; for we feel that to be a weakneſs in our ſelves, which indeed only flows from our want of power, or skill to do what we wiſh or deſire: It is alſo reaſonable to believe God would aſſiſt the Endeavours of the Good, with ſome helps ſuitable to their Nature. And that it could not be imagined, that thoſe who imitated him, ſhould not be ſpecially favoured by him: and therefore ſince this did not appear in this State, it was moſt reaſonable to think it ſhould be in another, where the Rewards ſhall be an admiſſion to a more perfect State of Conformity to God, with the felicity that follows it, and the puniſhments ſhould be a total excluſion from him, with all the horrour and darkneſs that muſt follow that. Theſe ſeemed to be the natural Reſults of ſuch ſeveral Courſes of life, as well as the Effects of Divine Juſtice, Rewarding or Puniſhing. For ſince he believed the Soul had a diſtinct ſubſiſtance, ſeparated from the Body; Upon its diſſolution there vas no reaſon to think it paſſed into a State of utter Oblivion, of what it had been in formerly: but that as the reflections on the good or evil it had done, muſt raiſe joy or horrour in it; So thoſe good or ill Diſpoſitions accompanying the departed Souls, they muſt either riſe up to a higher perfection, or ſink to a more depraved, and miſerable State. In this life variety of Affairs and Objects do much cool and divert our Minds; and are on the one hand often great temptations to the good, and give the bad ſome eaſe in their trouble; but in a

State

State wherein the Soul ſhall be ſeparated from ſenſible things, and employed in a more quick and ſublime way of Operarion, this muſt very much exalt the Joys and Improvements of the Good, and as much heighten the horrour and rage of the Wicked. So that it ſeemed a vain thing to pretend to believe a Supream Being, that is Wiſe and Good as well as great, and not to think a diſcrimination will be made between the Good and Bad, which, it is manifeſt, is not fully done in this life.

As for the Government of the World, if we believe the Supream Power made it, there is no reaſon to think he does not govern it: For all that we can fancy againſt it, is the diſtraction which that Infinite Variety of Second Cauſes, and the care of their Concerments, muſt give to the firſt, if it inſpects them all. But as among men, thoſe of weaker Capacities are wholly taken up with ſome one thing, whereas thoſe of more enlarged powers can, without diſtraction have many things within their care, as the Eye can at one view receive a great Variety of Objects, in that narrow Compaſs, without confuſion; So if we conceive the Divine Underſtanding to be as far above ours, as his Power of creating and framing the whole Univerſe, is above our limited activity; We will no more think the Government of the World a diſtraction to him: And if we have once overcome this prejudice, We ſhall be ready to acknowledge a Providence directing all Affairs; a care well becoming the Great Creator. As for Worſhipping Him, if we imagine Our Worſhip is a thing that adds to his happineſs, or gives him ſuch fond Pleaſure as weak people have to hear themſelves commended; or that our repeated Addreſſes do overcome Him through our meer Importunity, We have certainly very unworthy thoughts of him. The true ends of Worſhip come within another conſideration: which is this, A man is never entirely Reformed, till a new Principle governs his thoughts: Nothing makes that Principle ſo ſtrong, as deep and frequent Meditations of God; whoſe Nature though it be far above our Comprehenſion, yet his Goodneſs and Wiſdom are ſuch Perfections as fall within our Imagination: And he that thinks often of God, and conſiders him as governing the World, and as ever obſerving all his Actions, will feel a very ſen-

ſible effect of ſuch Meditations, as they grow more lively and frequent with him; ſo the end of Religious Worſhip either publick or private, is to make the Apprehenſions of God have a deeper root and a ſtronger influence on us. The frequent returns of theſe are neceſſary: Leſt if we allow of too long intervals between them, theſe Impreſſions may grow feebler, and other Suggeſtions may come in their room: And the Returns of Prayer are not to be conſidered as Favours extorted by meer Importunity, but as Rewards conferred on men ſo well diſpoſed, and prepared for them: according to the Promiſes that God has made, for anſwering our Prayers: thereby to engage and nouriſh a devout temper in us, which is the chief root of all true Holineſs and Vertue.

It is true we cannot have ſuitable Notions of the Divine Eſſence; as indeed we have no juſt *Idea* of any Eſſence whatſoever: Since we commonly conſider all things, either by their outward Figure, or by their Effects: and from thence make Inferences what their Nature muſt be. So though we cannot frame any perfect Image in our Minds of the Divinity, Yet we may from the Diſcoveries God has made of Himſelf, form ſuch Conceptions of Him, as may poſſeſs our Minds with great Reverence for Him, and beget in us ſuch a Love of thoſe Perfections as to engage us to imitate them. For when we ſay we love God; the meaning is, We love that Being that is Holy, Juſt, Good, Wiſe, and infinitely perfect: And loving theſe Attributes in that Object, will certainly carry us to deſire them in our ſelves. For what ever We love in another, We naturally, according to the degree of our love, endeavour to reſemble it. In ſum, the Loving and Worſhipping God, though they are juſt and reaſonable returns and expreſſions of the ſenſe we have of his Goodneſs to us; Yet they are exacted of us not only as a Tribute to God, but as a mean to beget in us a Conformity to his Nature, which is the chief end of pure and undefiled Religion.

If ſome Men, have at ſeveral times, found out Inventions to Corrupt this, and cheat the World; It is nothing but what occurs in every ſort of Employment, to which men betake themſelves.

ſelves. *Mountebanks* Corrupt Phyſick; *Petty-Foggers* have entangled the matters of Property, and all Profeſſions have been vitiated by Knaveries of a number of their Calling.

With all theſe Diſcourſes he was not equally ſatisfied: He ſeemed convinced that the Impreſſions of God being much in Mens minds, would be a powerful means to reform the World: and did not ſeem determined againſt Providence; But for the next State, he thought it more likely that the Soul began anew, and that her ſenſe of what ſhe had done in this Body, lying in the figures that are made in the Brain, as ſoon as ſhe diſlodged, all theſe periſhed, and that the Soul went into ſome other State to begin a new Courſe. But I ſaid on this Head, That this was at beſt a conjecture, raiſed in him by his fancy: for he could give no reaſon to prove it true; Nor was all the remembrance our Souls had of paſt things ſeated in ſome material figures lodged in the Brain: Though it could not be denied but a great deal of it lay in the Brain. That we have many abſtracted Notions and *Idea's* of immaterial things which depends not on bodily Figures: Some Sins, ſuch as Falſhood and ill Nature were ſeated in the Mind, as Luſt and Appetite were in the Body: And as the whole Body was the Receptacle of the Soul, and the Eyes and Ears were the Organs of Seeing and Hearing, ſo was the Brain the Seat of Memory: Yet the power and faculty of Memory, as well as of Seeing and Hearing, lay in the Mind: and ſo it was no unconceivable thing that either the Soul by its own ſtrength, or by the means of ſome ſubtiler Organs, which might be fitted for it in another ſtate, ſhould ſtill remember as well as think. But indeed We know ſo little of the Nature of our Souls, that it is a vain thing for us to raiſe an *Hypotheſis* out of the conjectures we have about it, or to reject one, becauſe of ſome difficulties that occur to us; ſince it is as hard to underſtand how we remember things now, as how we ſhall do it in another State? only we are ſure we do it now; and ſo we ſhall be then, when we do it.

When I preſſed him with the ſecret Joys that a good Man felt, particularly as he drew near Death, and the Horrours of

ill men especially at that time; He was willing to ascribe it to the Impressions they had from their Education: Bur he often confessed, that whether the business of Religion was true or not, he thought those who had the perswasions of it, and lived so that they had quiet in their Consciences, and believed God governed the World, and acquiesced in his Providence, and had the hope of an endless blessedness in another State, the happiest men in the World: And said, He would give all that he was Master of, to be under those perswasions, and to have the supports and Joys that must needs flow form them. I told him the main Root of all Corruptions in Mens Principles was their ill life; Which as it darkened their Minds, and disabled them from discerning better things; so it made it necessary for them to seek out such Opinions as might give them ease from those Clamours, that would otherwise have been raised within them: He did not deny but that after the doing of some things he felt great and severe Challenges within himself; But he said, He felt not these after some others which I would perhaps call far greater Sins, than those that affected him more sensibly: This I said, might flow from the Disorders he had cast himself into, which had corrupted his judgment, and viciated his tast of things? and by his long continuance in, and frequent repeating of some Immoralities, he had made them so Familiar to him, that they were become as it were natural: And then it was no wonder if he had not so exact a sense of what was Good or Evil; as a Feaverish man cannot judge of Tasts.

He did acknowledge the whole Systeme of Religion, if believed, was a greater foundation of quiet than any other thing whatsoever: for all the quiet he had in his mind, was, that he could not think so good a Being as the Deity would make him miserable. I asked if when by the ill course of his life he had brought so many Diseases on his Body, he could blame God for it: or expect that he should deliver him from them by a Miracle. He confessed there was no reason for that: I then urged; that if Sin should cast the mind by a natural Effect, into endless Horrours and Agonies, which being seated in a

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Being not ſubject to Death, muſt laſt for ever, unleſs ſome Miraculous Power interpoſed, could he accuſe God for that which was the effect of his own choice and ill life.

He ſaid, They were happy that believed: for it was not in every mans power.

And upon this we diſcourſed long about *Revealed Religion*. He ſaid, He did not underſtand that buſineſs of Inſpiration; He believed the Pen-men of the Scriptures had heats and honeſty, and ſo writ: but could not comprehend how God ſhould reveal his Secrets to Mankind. Why was not Man made a Creature more diſpoſed for Religion, and better Illuminated? He could not apprehend how there ſhould be any corruption in the Nature of Man, or a Lapſe derived from *Adam*. Gods communicating his Mind, to one Man, was the putting it in his power to cheat the World: For Propheſies and Miracles, the World had been always full of ſtrange Stories; for the boldneſs and cunning of Contrivers meeting with the Simplicity and Credulity of the People, things were eaſily received; and being once received paſſed down without contradiction. The Incoherences of Stile in the Scriptures, the odd Tranſitions; the ſeeming Contradictions, chiefly about the Order of time, the Cruelties enjoyned the *Iſraelites* in deſtroying the *Canaanites*, Circumciſion, and many other Rites of the *Jewiſh* Worſhip; ſeemed to him inſutable to the Divine Nature: And the firſt three Chapters of *Geneſis*, he thought could not be true, unleſs they were Parables. This was the ſubſtance of what he excepted to *Revealed Religion* in general, and to the *Old Teſtament* in particular.

I anſwered to all this, that believing a thing upon the Teſtimony of another, in other matters where there was no reaſon to ſuſpect the teſtimony, chiefly where it was confirmed by other Circumſtances, was not only a reaſonable thing, but it was the hinge on which all the Government and Juſtice in the World depended: Since all Courts of Juſtice proceed upon the Evidence given by Witneſſes: for the uſe of Writings is but a thing more lately brought into the World. So then if the credibilty

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of the thing, the innocence and disinteredness of the Witnesses, the number of them, and the publickest Confirmations that could possibly be given, do concur to perswade us of any matter of Fact, it is a vain thing to say, because it is possible for so many men to agree in a Lye, that therefore these have done it. In all other things a man gives his assent when the credibility is strong on the one side, and there appears nothing on the other side to ballance it. So such numbers agreeing in their Testimony to these Miracles; for instance of our Saviours calling *Lazarus* out of the Grave the fourth day after he was buried, and his own rising again after he was certainly dead; If there had been never so many Impostures in the World, no man can with any reasonable colour pretend this was one. We find both by the *Jewish* and *Roman* Writers that lived in that time, that our Saviour was Crucified: and that all his Disciples and Followers believed certainly that he rose again. They believed this upon the Testimony of the Apostles, and of many hundreds who saw it, and died confirming it: They went about to perswade the World of it, with great Zeal, though they knew they were to get nothing by it, but Reproach and Sufferings: and by many Wonders which they wrought they confirmed their Testimony. Now to avoid all this, by saying it is possible this might be a Contrivance, and to give no presumption, to make it so much as probable, that it was so, is in plain *English* to say, *We are resolved let the Evidence be what it will, We will not believe it.*

He said, If a man says he cannot believe, what help is there? for he was not master of his own Belief, and believing was at highest but a probable Opinion. To this I answered, That if a man will let a wanton conceit possess his fancy against these things, and never consider the Evidence for Religion on the other hand, but reject it upon a slight view of it, he ought not to say he cannot, but he will not believe: and while a man lives an ill course of life, he is not fitly qualified to examine the matter aright. Let him grow calm and vertuous, and upon due application examine things fairly, and then let him pronounce accordingly

according to his Conſcience, if to take it at its loweſt, the Reaſons on the one hand are not much ſtronger than they are on the other. For I found he was ſo poſſeſſed with the general conceit that a mixture of Knaves and Fooles had made all extraordinary things be eaſily believed, that it carried him away to determine the matter, without ſo much as looking on the Hiſtorical Evidence for the truth of *Chriſtianity*, which he had not enquired into, but had bent all his Wit and Study to the ſupport of the other ſide. As for that, that Believing is at beſt but an Opinion; if the Evidence be but probable, it is ſo: but if it be ſuch that it cannot be queſtioned, it grows as certain as Knowledge: For we are no leſs certain that there is a great Town called *Conſtantinople*, the Seat of the *Ottoman* Empire, than that there is another called *London*. We as little doubt that Queen *Elizabeth* once Reigned, as that King *Charles* now Reigns in *England*. So that Believing may be as certain, and as little ſubject to doubting as Seeing or Knowing.

There are two ſorts of believing Divine matters; the one is wrought in us by our comparing all the Evidences of matter of Fact, for the confirmation of *Revealed Religion*; with the Propheſies in the Scripture; where things were punctually predicted, ſome Ages before their completion; not in dark and doubtful words, uttered like Oracles, which might bend to any Event: But in plain terms, as the foretelling that *Cyrus* by name ſhould ſend the *Jews* back from the Captivity, after the fixed period of ſeventy years: The Hiſtory of the *Syrian* and *Egyptian* Kings ſo punctually foretold by *Daniel*, and the Prediction of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, with many Circumſtances relating to it, made by our *Saviour*; joyning theſe to the excellent Rule and Deſign of the Scripture in matters of *Morality*, it is at leaſt as reaſonable to believe this as any thing elſe in the World. Yet ſuch a believing as this, is only a general perſwaſion in the Mind, which has not that effect, till a man applying himſelf to the Directions ſet down in the Scriptures (which upon ſuch Evidence cannot be denied, to be as reaſonable, as for a man to follow the Preſcriptions of a Learned Phyſitian, and when the Rules

are both good and eaſie, to ſubmit to them for the recovering of his health) and by following theſe, finds a power entring within him, that frees him from the ſlavery of his Appetites and Paſſions, that exalts his Mind above the accidents of life, and ſpreads an inward purity in his Heart, from which a ſerene and calm Joy ariſes within him: And good men by the efficacy theſe Methods have upon them, and from the returns of their prayers, and other endeavours, grow aſſured that theſe things are true and anſwerable to the Promiſes they find regiſtred in Scripture. All this, he ſaid, might be fancy: But to this I anſwered, That as it were unreaſonable to tell a man that is abroad, and knows he is awake, that perhaps he is in a dream, and in his Bed, and only thinks he is abroad, or that as ſome go about in their ſleep, ſo he may be aſleep ſtill; So good and religious men know, though others may be abuſed, by their fancies, that they are under no ſuch deception: and find they are neither hot nor *Enthuſiaſtical*, but under the power of calm and clear Principles. All this he ſaid he did not underſtand, and that it was to aſſert or beg the thing in Queſtion, which he could not comprehend.

As for the poſſibility of Revelation, it was a vain thing to deny it: For as God gives us the ſenſe of ſeeing material Objects by our Eyes, and opened in ſome a capacity of apprehending high and ſublime things, of which other men ſeemed utterly incapable: So it was a weak aſſertion that God cannot awaken a power in ſome mens Minds, to apprehend and know ſome things, in ſuch a manner that others are not capable of it. This is not half ſo incredible to us as ſight is to a blind man, who yet may be convinced there is a ſtrange power of ſeeing that governs men, of which he finds himſelf deprived. As for the capacity put into ſuch mens hands to deceive the World We are at the ſame time to conſider, that beſides the probity of their tempers, it cannot be thought but God can ſo forcibly bind up a man in ſome things, that it ſhould not be in his power to deliver them otherwiſe than as he gives him in Commiſſion: beſides the Confirmation of Miracles are a divine Credential to warrant ſuch perſons in what they deliver to the World: which cannot be imagined

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can be joyned to a Lye, ſince this were to put the Omnipotence of God, to atteſt that which no honeſt man will do. For the buſineſs of the Fall of Man, and other things of which we cannot perhaps give our ſelves a perfect account: We who cannot fathome the Secrets of the Councel of God, do very unreaſonably to take on us, to reject an excellent Syſteme of good and holy Rules, becauſe we cannot ſatisfie our ſelves about ſome difficulties in them. Common Experience tells us, There is a great diſorder in our Natures, which is not eaſily rectified: All *Philoſophers* were ſenſible of it, and every man that deſigns to govern himſelf by Reaſon, feels the ſtruggle between it and nature: So that it is plain, there is a Lapſe of the high powers of the Soul.

But why, ſaid he, could not this be rectified, by ſome plain Rules given; but men muſt come and ſhew a trick to perſwade the World they ſpeak to them in the Name of God. I Anſwered, That Religion being a deſign to recover and ſave Mankind, was to be ſo opened as to awaken and work upon all ſorts of people: and generally men of a ſimplicity of Mind, were thoſe that were the fitteſt Objects for God to ſhew his favour to; Therefore it was neceſſary that Meſſengers ſent from Heaven ſhould appear with ſuch allarming Evidences, as might awaken the World, and prepare them by ſome aſtoniſhing Signs, to liſten to the Doctrine they were to deliver. *Philoſophy*, that was only a matter of fine Speculation, had few Votaries: And as there was no Authority in it to bind the World to believe its Dictates, ſo they were only received by ſome of nobler and refined Natures, who could apply themſelves to, and delight in ſuch Notions. But true Religion was to be built on a Foundation, that ſhould carry more weight on it, and to have ſuch Convictions, as might not only reach thoſe who were already diſpoſed to receive them, but rouſe up ſuch as without great and ſenſible excitation would have otherwiſe ſlept on in their ill Courſes.

Upon this and ſome ſuch Occaſions, I told him, I ſaw the ill uſe he made of his Wit, by which he ſtunned the graveſt things with a ſlight daſh of his Fancy: and the pleaſure he found in ſuch wanton Expreſſions, as calling the doing of Miracles *the ſhewing*

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of a trick, did really keep him from examining them, with that care which such things required.

For the *Old Testament*, We are so remote from that time, We have so little knowledge of the Language in which it was writ, have so imperfect an account of the History of those Ages, know nothing of their Customs, Forms of Speech, and the several Periods they might have, by which they reckoned their time, that it is rather a wonder We should understand so much of it than that many passages in it should be so dark to us. The chief use it has to us *Christians*, is, that from Writings which the *Jews* acknowlege to be divinely inspired, it is manifest the *Messias* was promised before the destruction of their Temple: which being done long ago; and these Prophesies agreeing to our Saviour, and to no other; Here is a great Confirmation given to the Gospel. But though many things in these Books could not be understood by us, who live above 3000 years after the chief of them were written, it is no such extraordinary matter.

For that of the Destruction of the *Canaanites* by the *Israelites*, It is to be considered, that if God had sent a Plague among them all, that could not have been found fault with. If then God had a Right to take away their Lives, without Injustice or Cruelty, he had a Right to appoint others to do it, as well to execute it by a more immediate way: And the taking away people by the Sword, is a much gentler way of dying, than to be smitten with a Plague or a Famine. And for the Children that were Innocent of their Fathers faults God could in another State make that up to them. So all the difficulty is, Why were the *Israelites* commanded to execute a thing of such Barbarity: But this will not seem so hard, if we consider that this was to be no Precedent, for future times: since they did not do it but upon special Warrant and Commission from Heaven, evidenc'd to all the World by such mighty Miracles as did plainly shew, That they were particularly design'd by God to be the Executioners of his Justice. And God by imploying them in so severe a Service, intended to possess them with great horrour of Idolatry, which was punished in so extream a manner.

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For the Rites of their Religion. We can ill judge of them, except We perfectly understood the Idolatries round about them: To which we find they were much inclined: So they were to be bent by other Rites to an extream version from them: And yet by the pomp of many of their Ceremonies and Sacrifices, great Indulgences were given to a people naturally fond of a visible splendor in Religious Worship. In all which, if we cannot descend to such satisfactory Answers in every particular, as a curious man would desire, it is no wonder. The long interval of time, and other accidents, have worn out those things which were necessary to give us a clearer light into the meaning of them. And for the story of the Creation, how far some things in it may be Parabolical, and how far Historical, has been much disputed: there is nothing in it that may not be historically true. For if it be acknowledged that Spirits can form Voices in the Air, for which we have as good Authority as for any thing in History; Then it is no wonder that *Eve* being so lately created, might be deceived, and think a *Serpent* spake to her, when the Evil Spirit framed the Voice.

But in all these things I told him he was in the wrong way, when he examined the business of Religion, by some dark parts of Scripture: Therefore I desired him to consider the whole Contexture of the *Christian Religion*, the Rules it gives, and the Methods it prescribes. Nothing can conduce more to the peace, order and happiness of the World, then to be governed by its Ruels. Nothing is more for the Interests of every man in particular: The Rules of Sobriety, Temperance and Moderation, were the best Preservers of life, and which was perhaps more, of Health. Humility, Contempt of the Vanities of the World, and the being well employed, raised a mans Mind to a freedom from the Follies and Temptations that haunted the greatest part. Nothing was so Generous and Great as to supply the Necessities of the Poor, and to forgive Injuries. Nothing raised and maintained a mans Reputation so much, as to be exactly just, and merciful; kind, charitable, and compassionate. Nothing opened the powers of a mans Soul so much as a calm Temper, a serene

Mind, free of Passion and Disorder: Nothing made Societies, Families, and Neighbourhoods so happy, as when these Rules, which the Gospel prescribes, took place; *Of doing as we would have others do to us, and loving our Neighbours as our selves.*

The *Christian Worship* was also plain and simple; suitable to so pure a Doctrine. The Ceremonies of it were few and significant, as the admission to it by a washing with Water, and the Memorial of our Saviour's Death in *Bread* and *Wine*; The Motives in it to perswade to this Purity, were strong: That God sees us, and will Judge us for all our Actions: That we shall be for ever happy or miserable, as we pass our Lives here: The Example of our Saviour's Life, and the great expressions of his Love in Dying for us, are mighty Engagements to Obey and Imitate him. The plain way of Expression used by our Saviour and his Apostles, shews there was no Artifice, where there was so much Simplicity used: There were no Secrets kept only among the Priests, but every thing was open to all *Christians*: The Rewards of Holiness are not entirely put over to another State, but good men are specially blest with peace in their Consciences, great Joy in the Confidence they have of the Love of God, and of seeing Him for ever: And often a signal Course of Blessings follows them in their whole Lives: But if at other times Calamities fell on them, these were so much mitigated by the Patience they were taught, and the inward Assistances, with which they were furnished, that even those Crosses were converted to Blessings.

I desired he would lay all these things together, and see what he could except to them, to make him think this was a Contrivance. Interest appears in all Humane contrivances: Our Saviour plainly had none; He avoided Applause, withdrew Himself from the Offers of a Crown: He submitted to Poverty and Reproache, and much Contradicton in his Life, and to a most ignominious and painful Death. His Apostles had none neither, They did not pretend either to Power or Wealth; But delivered a Doctrine that must needs condemn them, if they ever made such use of it: They declared their Commission fully without reserves

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till other times: They Recorded their own Weakneſs: Some of them wrought with their own hands; and when they received the Charities of their Converts, it was not ſo much to ſupply their own Neceſſities, as to diſtribute to others: They knew they were to ſuffer much for giving their Teſtimonies, to what they had ſeen and heard: In which ſo many in a thing ſo viſible, as Chriſt's Reſurrection and Aſcenſion, and the Effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt which He had promiſed, could not be deceived: And they gave ſuch publick Confirmations of it by the Wonders they themſelves wrought, that great multitudes were converted to a Doctrine, which, beſides the oppoſition it gave to Luſt and Paſſion, was born down and Perſecuted for 300 years: and yet its force was ſuch, that it not only weathered out all thoſe Storms, but even grew and ſpread vaſtly under them. *Pliny* about threeſcore years after, found their Numbers great and their Lives Innocent: and even *Lucian* amidſt all his Raillery, gives a high Teſtimony to their Charity and Contempt of Life, and the other Virtues of the *Chriſtians*; which is likewiſe more than once done by Malice it ſelfe, *Julian* the Apoſtate.

If a man will lay all this in one ballance, and compare with it the few Exceptions brought to it, he will ſoon find how ſtrong the one, and how ſlight the other are. Therefore it was an improper way, to begin at ſome Cavils about ſome Paſſages in the *New Teſtament*, or the *Old*, and from thence to prepoſſeſs one's Mind againſt the whole. The right method had been firſt to conſider the whole matter, and from ſo general a view to deſcend to more particular Enquiries: Whereas they ſuffered their Minds to be foreſtalled with Prejudices; ſo that they never examined the matter impartially.

To the greateſt part of this he ſeemed to aſſent, only he excepted to the belief of Myſteries in the *Chriſtian Religion*; which he thought no man could do, ſince it is not in a mans power to believe that which he cannot comprehend: and of which He can have no Notion. The believing Myſteries, he ſaid, made way for all the Juglings of Prieſts, for they getting the people under them in that Point, ſet out to them what they pleaſed;

and giving it a hard Name; and calling it a *Mystery*; The people were tamed, and easily believed it. The restraining a man from the use of Women, except one in the way of Mariage, and denying the remedy of Divorce, he thought unreasonable Imposions on the freedom of Mankind: And the business of the Clergy, and their Maintenance, with the belief of some Authority and Power conveyed in their Orders, lookt, as he thought, like a piece of Contrivance: And why, said he, must a man tell me, I cannot be saved, unless I believe things against my Reason, and then that I must pay him for telling me of them? These were all the Exceptions which at any time I heard from him to *Christianity*. To which I made these answers.

For Mysteries it is plain there is in every thing somewhat that is unaccountable. How Animals or Men are formed in their Mothers bellies, how Seeds grow in the Earth, how the Soul dwells in the Body; and acts and moves it; How we retain the Figures of so many words or things in our Memories, and how we draw them out so easily and orderly in our Thoughts or Discourses? How Sight and Hearing were so quick and distinct, how we move, and how Bodies were compounded and united? These things if we follow them into all the Difficulties, that we may raise about them, will appear every whit as unaccountable as any Mystery of Religion: And a blind or deaf man would judge Sight or Hearing as incredible, as any Mystery may be judged by us: For our Reason is not equal to them. In the same rank, different degrees of Age or Capacity raise some far above others: So that Children cannot fathome the Learning, nor weak persons the Councels of more illuminated Minds: Therfore it was no wonder if we could not understand the Divine Essence, We cannot imagine how two such different Natures as a Soul and a Body should so unite together, and be mutually affected with one anothers Concerns, and how the Soul has one Principle of Reason, by which it acts Intellectually, and another of life by which it joyns to the Body and acts Vitally; two Principles so widely differing both in their Nature and Operation, and yet united in one and the same Person. There might be as many

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hard Arguments brought againſt the poſſibility of theſe things, which yet every one knows to be true, from Speculative Notions, as againſt the Myſteries mentioned in the Scriptures. As that of the *Trinity*, That in one Eſſence there are three different Principles of Operation, which, for want of Terms fit to expreſs them by, We call *Perſons*, and are called in Scripture *The Father Son, and Holy Ghoſt*, and that the Second of theſe did unite Himſelf in a moſt intimate manner with the Humane Nature of Jeſus Chriſt: And that the Sufferings he underwent, were accepted of God as a Sacrifice for our Sins; Who therupon conferred on Him a Power of granting Eternal Life to all that ſubmit to the Terms on which He offers it; And that the matter of which our Bodies once conſiſted, which may be as juſtly called the Bodies we laid down at our Deaths, as theſe can be ſaid to be the Bodies which we formerly lived in, being refined and made more ſpiritual, ſhall be reunited to our Souls, and become a fit Inſtrument for them in a more perfect Eſtate? And that God inwardly bends and moves our Wills, by ſuch Impreſſions, as he can make on our Bodies and Minds.

Theſe, which are the chief Myſteries of our Religion, are neither ſo unreaſonable, that any other Objection lies againſt them but this, that they agree not with our Common Notions, nor ſo unaccountable that ſomewhat like them, cannot be aſſigned in other things, which are believed really to be, though the manner of them cannot be apprehended: So this ought not to be any juſt Objection to the ſubmiſſion of our Reaſon to what we cannot ſo well conceive, provided our belief of it be well grounded. There have been too many Niceties brought in indeed, rather to darken then explain theſe: They have been defended by weak Arguments, and illuſtrated by Similies not always ſo very apt and pertinent. And new ſubtilties have been added, which have rather perplexed than cleared them. All this cannot be denied; the Oppoſition of *Hereticks* anciently, occaſioned too much Curioſity among the *Fathers*: Which the *Schoolmen* have wonderfully advanced of late times. But if Myſteries were received, rather in the ſimplicity in which they are delive-

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red in the Scriptures, than according to the deſcantings of fanciful men upon them, they would not appear much more incredible, than ſome of the common Objects of ſenſe and perception. And it is a needleſs fear that if ſome Myſteries are acknowledged, which are plainly mentioned in the *New Teſtament*, it will then be in the power of the Prieſts to add more at their pleaſure. For it is an abſurd Inference from our being bound to aſſent to ſome Truths about the Divine Eſſence, of which the manner is not underſtood, to argue that therefore in an Object preſented duly to our Senſes, ſuch as *Bread* and *Wine*, We ſhould be bound to believe againſt their Teſtimony, that it is not what our Senſes perceived it to be but the whole *Fleſh* and *Blood* of *Chriſt*; an entire Body being in every Crumb and drop of it. It is not indeed in a mans power to believe thus againſt his Senſe and Reaſon, where the Object is proportioned to them, and fully applied, and the Organs are under no indiſpoſition or diſorder. It is certain that no Myſtery is to be admitted, but from very clear and expreſs Authorities upon Scripture, which could not reaſonably be underſtood in any other ſenſe, And though a man cannot form an explicite Notion of a Myſtery, for then it would be no longer a Myſtery, yet in general he may believe a thing to be, though he cannot give himſelf a particular account of the way of it; or rather though he cannot Anſwer ſome Objections which lie againſt it. We know We believe many ſuch in Humane matters, which are more within our reach: and it is very unreaſonable to ſay, We may not do it in Divine things, which are much more above our Apprehenſions.

For the ſevere Reſtraint of the uſe of Women, it is hard to deny that Priviledge to Jeſus Chriſt as a Law-Giver, to lay ſuch Reſtraints, as all inferiour Legiſlators do, who when they find the Liberties their Subjects take, prove hurtful to them, ſet ſuch Limits, and make ſuch Regulatons, as they judge neceſſary and expedient. It cannot be ſaid but the Reſtraint of Appetite is neceſſary in ſome Inſtances: and if it is neceſſary in theſe, perhaps other Reſtraints are no leſs neceſſary, to fortifie and ſecure theſe.

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For if it be acknowledged that Men have a property in their Wives and Daughters, ſo that to defile the one, or corrupt the other, is an injuſt and injurious thing; It is certain, that except a man carefully governs his Appetites, he will break through theſe Reſtraints: and therefore our Saviour knowing that nothing could ſo effectually deliver the World from the miſchief of unreſtrained Appetite, as ſuch a Confinement, might very reaſonably enjoyn it. And in all ſuch Caſes We are to ballance the Inconveniences on both hands, and where we find they are heavieſt, We are to acknowledge the Equity of the Law. On the one hand there is no prejudice, but the reſtraint of Appetite; On the other, are the miſchiefs of being given up to pleaſure, of running inordinately into it, of breaking the quiet of our own Family at home, and of others abroad: the ingaging into much Paſſion, the doing many falſe and impious things to compaſs what is deſired, the Waſt of mens Eſtates, time, and health. Now let any man judge, Whether the prejudices on this ſide, are not greater, than that ſingle one of the other ſide, of being denied ſome pleaſure: For *Polygamy*, it is but reaſonable ſince Women are equally concern'd in the Laws of Marriage, that they ſhould be conſidered as well as men: But in a State of *Polygamy* they are under great miſery and jealouſie, and are indeed barbarouſly uſed. Man being alſo of a ſociable Nature, Friendſhip and Converſe were among the Primitive Intendments of Mariage, in which as far as the man may excel the Wife in greatneſs of Mind, and height of Knowledge, the Wife ſomeway makes that up with her Affection and tender Care: So that from both happily mixed, there ariſes a Harmony, which is to vertuous Minds one of the greateſt joys of life: But all this is gone in a ſtate of *Polygamy*, which occaſions perpetual Jarrings and Jealouſies. And the Variety does but engage men to a freer Range of pleaſure, which is not to be put in the Ballance with the far greater Miſchiefs that muſt follow the other courſe. So that it is plain, Our Saviour conſidered the nature of man, what it could bear, and what was fit for it, when he ſo reſtrained us in theſe our Liberties. And for Divorce, a power to break that Bond would too much encou-

rage married persons in the little quarrellings that may rise between them; if it were in their power to depart one from another. For when they know that cannot be, and that they must live and die together, it does naturally incline them to lay down their Resentments, and to endeavour to live as well together as they can. So the Law of the Gospel being a Law of Love, designed to engage *Christians* to mutual love; It was fit that all such provisions should be made, as might advance and maintain it: and all such Liberties be taken away, as are apt to enkindle or foment strife. This might fall in some instances to be uneasie and hard enough, but Laws consider what falls out most commonly, and cannot provide for all particular Cases. The best Laws are in some instances very great grievances. But the Advantages being ballanced with the Inconveniences, Measures are to be taken accordingly. Upon this whole matter I said, That pleasure stood in opposition to other Considerations of great Weight, and so the decision was easie. And since our Saviour offers us so great Rewards, It is but reasonable He have a Priviledge of loading these Promises with such conditions, as are not in themselves grateful to our natural Inclinations: For all that propose high Rewards, have thereby a right to exact difficult performances.

To this he said, We are sure the terms are difficult, but are not so sure of the Rewards. Upon this I told him, That we have the same assurance of the Rewards, that we have of the other parts of *Christian Religion.* We have the Promises of God made to us by Christ, confirmed by many Miracles: We have the Earnests of these, in the quiet and peace which follows a good Conscience: and in the Resurrection of Him from the dead, who hath promised to raise us up. So that the Reward is sufficiently assured to us: And there is no reason it should be given to us, before the Conditions are performed, on which the Promises are made. It is but reasonable that we should trust God, and do our Duty, *In hopes of that eternal Life, which God who cannot lie, hath promised.* The difficulties are not so great, as those which sometimes the commonest concerns of Life bring upon us: The learning some Trades or Sciences, the governing our Health and Affairs, bring us often under

der as great ſtraights. So that it ought to be no juſt prejudice, that there are ſome things in Religion that are uneaſie, ſince this is rather the effect of our corrupt natures, which are farther deprav'd by vitious habits, and can hardly turn to any new courſe of life, without ſome pain, than of the Dictates of *Chriſtianity*, which are in themſelves juſt and reaſonable, and will be eaſie to us when renew'd, and in a good meaſure reſtor'd to our Primitive Integrity.

As for the Exceptions he had to the Maintenance of the Clergy, and the Authority to which they pretended; if they ſtretched their Deſigns too far, The Goſpel did plainly reprove them for it: So that it was very ſuitable to that Church, which was ſo groſly faulty this way, to take the Scriptures out of the hands of the people, ſince they do ſo manifeſtly diſclaim all ſuch practices. The Prieſts of the true *Chriſtian Religion* have no ſecrets among them, which the World muſt not know, but are only an Order of Men dedicated to God, to attend on Sacred things, who ought to be holy in a more peculiar manner, ſince they are to handle the things of God. It was neceſſary that ſuch perſons ſhould have a due Eſteem paid them, and a fit Maintenance appointed for them: That ſo they might be preſerved from the Contempt that follows Poverty, and the Diſtractions which the providing againſt it might otherways involve them in: And as in the Order of the World, it was neceſſary for the ſupport of Magiſtracy and Government, and for preſerving its eſteem, that ſome ſtate be uſed (though it is a happineſs when Great Men have Philoſophical Minds, to deſpiſe the Pageantry of it.) So the plentiful ſupply of the Clergy, if well uſed and applied by them, will certainly turn to the advantage of Religion. And if ſome men either through Ambition or Covetouſneſs uſed indirect means, or ſervile Compliances to aſpire to ſuch Dignities, and being poſſeſſed of them, applied their Wealth either to Luxury or vain Pomp, or made great Fortunes out of it for their Families; theſe were perſonal failings in which the Doctrine of Chriſt was not concerned.

He upon that told me plainly, There was nothing that gave him, and many others, a more ſecret encouragement in their ill ways, than that thoſe who pretended to believe, lived ſo that they

could not be thought to be in earneſt, when they ſaid it: For he was ſure *Religion* was either a meer Contrivance, or the moſt important thing that could be: So that if he once believed, he would ſet himſelf in great earneſt to live ſuitably to it. The aſpirings that he had obſerved at Court, of ſome of the Clergy, with the ſervile ways they took to attain to Preferment, and the Animoſities among thoſe of ſeveral Parties, about trifles, made him often think they ſuſpected the things were not true, which in their Sermons and Diſcourſes they ſo earneſtly recommended. Of this he had gathered many Inſtances; I knew ſome of them were Miſtakes and Calumnies; Yet I could not deny but ſomething of them might be too true: And I publiſh this the more freely, to put all that pretend to Religion, chiefly thoſe that are dedicated to holy Functions, in mind of the great Obligation that lies on them to live ſuitably to their Profeſſion: Since otherwiſe a great deal of the Irreligion and Atheiſm that is among us, may too juſtly be charged on them: for wicked men are delighted out of meaſure when they diſcover ill things in them, and conclude from thence not only that they are Hypocrites, but that Religion it ſelf is a cheat.

But I ſaid to him upon this Head, that though no good man could continue in the practice of any known ſin, yet ſuch might, by the violence or ſurpriſe of a Temptation, to which they are liable as much as others, be of a ſudden overcome to do an ill thing, to their great grief all their life after. And then it was a very injuſt Inference, Upon ſome few failings, to conclude that ſuch men do not believe themſelves. But how bad ſoever many are, it cannot be denied but there are alſo many both of the Clergy and Laity, who give great and real Demonſtrations of the power Religion has over them; in their Contempt of the World, the ſtrictneſs of their Lives, their readineſs to forgive Injuries, to relieve the Poor, and to do good on all Occaſions: and yet even theſe may have their failings, either in ſuch things wherein their Conſtitutions are weak, or their Temptations ſtrong and ſuddain: And in all ſuch caſes We are to judge of men, rather by the courſe of their Lives, than by the Errors, that they through infirmity or ſurprize may have ſlipt into.

Theſe

Theſe were the chief Heads we diſcourſed on; and as far as I can remember, I have faithfully repeated the ſubſtance of our Arguments: I have not concealed the ſtrongeſt things he ſaid to me, but though I have not enlarged on all the Excurſions of his Wit in ſetting them off, Yet I have given them their full ſtrength, as he expreſſed them; and as far as I could recollect, have uſed his own words: So that I am afraid ſome may cenſure me for ſetting down theſe things ſo largely, which Impious Men may make an ill uſe of, and gather together to encourage and defend themſelves in their Vices: But if they will compare them with the Anſwers made to them, and the ſenſe that ſo great and refined a Wit had of them afterwards, I hope they may through the bleſſing of God be not altogether ineffectual.

The iſſue of all our Diſcourſes was this, He told me, He ſaw Vice and Impiety were as contrary to Humane Society, as wild Beaſts let looſe would be; and therefore he firmly reſolved to change the whole method of his Life: to become ſtrictly juſt and true, to be Chaſt and Temperate, to forbear Swearing and Irreligious Diſcourſe, to Worſhip and Pray to his Maker: And that though he was not arrived at a full perſwaſion of *Chriſtianity*, he would never employ his Wit more to run it down, or to corrupt others.

Of which I have ſince a further aſſurance, from a Perſon of Quality, who converſed much with him, the laſt year of his life; to whom he would often ſay, That he was happy, if he did believe, and that he would never endeavour to draw him from it.

To all this I Anſwered, That a Vertuous Life would be very uneaſie to him, unleſs Vicious Inclinations were removed: It would otherwiſe be a perpetual conſtraint. Nor could it be effected without an inward Principle to change him: and that was only to be had by applying himſelf to God for it in frequent and earneſt Prayers: And I was ſure if his Mind were once cleared of theſe Diſorders, and cured of thoſe Diſtempers, which Vice brought on it, ſo great an Underſtanding would ſoon ſee through all thoſe ſlights of Wit, that do feed Atheiſm and Irreligion: which have a falſe glittering in them, that dazles ſome weak ſighted Minds, who have not capacity enough to penetrate further than

than the Surfaces of things: and so they stick in these Toyls, which the strength of his Mind would soon break thorough, if it were once freed from those things that depressed and darkened it.

At this pass he was when he went from *London*, about the beginning of *April*. He had not been long in the Country when he thought he was so well, that being to go to his Estate in *Somersetshire* he rode thither Post. This heat and violent motion did so inflame an Ulcer, that was in his Bladder, that it raised a very great pain in those parts: Yet he with much difficulty came back by Coach to the Lodge at *Woodstock-Park*. He was then wounded both in Body and Mind: He understood Physick and his own Constitution and Distemper so well, that he concluded he could hardly recover: For the Ulcer broke, and vast quantities of purulent matter past with his Urine. But now the hand of God touched him, and as he told me, It was not only a general dark Melancholy over his Mind, such as he had formerly felt; but a most penetrating cutting Sorrow. So that though in his Body he suffered extream pain, for some weeks, Yet the Agonies of his Mind sometimes swallowed up the sense of what he felt in his Body. He told me, and gave it me in charge, to tell it to one for whom he was much concern'd, that though there were nothing to come after this life, Yet all the Pleasures he had ever known in Sin, were not worth that torture he had felt in his Mind: He considered he had not only neglected and dishonoured, but had openly defied his Maker, and had drawn many others into the like Impieties: So that he looked on himself as one that was in great danger of being damn'd. He then set himself wholly to turn to God unfeignedly, and to do all that was possible in that little remainder of his life which was before him, to redeem those great portions of it, that he had formerly so ill employed. The Minister that attended constantly on him, was that good and worthy man Mr. *Parsons*, his Mothers Chaplain, who hath since his death Preached, according to the directions he received from him, his Funeral Sermon: in which there are so many remarkable Passages, that I shall refer my *Reader* to them, and will repeat none of them here, that I may

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not thereby leſſen his deſire to edifie himſelf by that excellent Diſcourſe, which has given ſo great and ſo general a ſatisfaction to all good and judicious *Readers*. I ſhall ſpeak curſorily of every thing, but that which I had immediately from himſelf: He was viſited every week of his ſickneſs by his *Dioceſan*, that truly Primitive Prelate, the Lord Biſhop of *Oxford*; who though he lived ſix miles from him, yet looked on this as ſo important a piece of his Paſtoral Care, that he went often to him; and treated him with that decent plainneſs and freedom which is ſo natural to him; and took care alſo that he might not on terms more eaſie than ſafe, be at peace with himſelf. Dr. *Marſhal* the Learned and Worthy *Rector* of *Lincoln*-Colledge in *Oxford*, being the Miniſter of the Pariſh, was alſo frequently with him: and by theſe helps he was ſo directed and ſupported, that he might not on the one hand ſatisfie himſelf with too ſuperficial a Repentance, nor on the other hand be out of meaſure oppreſſed with a ſorrow without hope. As ſoon as I heard he was ill, but yet in ſuch a condition that I might write to him, I wrote a Letter to the beſt purpoſe I could. He ordered one that was then with him, to aſſure me it was very welcome to him: but not ſatisfied with that, he ſent me an Anſwer, which, as the Counteſs of *Rocheſter* his Mother told me, he dictated every word, and then ſigned it. I was once unwilling to have publiſh'd it, becauſe of a Complement in it to my ſelf, far above my merit, and not very well ſuiting with his Condition.

But the ſenſe he expreſſes in it of the Change then wrought on him, hath upon ſecond thoughts prevail'd with me to publiſh it, leaving out what concerns my ſelf.

Woodſtock-

Woodstock-Park,
June 25. 1680. *Oxfordshire.*

My most Honour'd Dr. Burnett,

MY Spirits and Body decay so equally together, that I shall write You a Letter as weak as I am in person. I begin to value Church-men above all men in the World, &c. If God be yet pleased to spare me longer in this World, I hope in your Conversation to be exalted to that degree of Piety, that the World may see how much I abhor what I so long loved, and how much I glory in Repentance, and in Gods Service. Bestow your Prayers upon me, that God would spare me (if it be his good Will) to shew a true Repentance and Amendment of life for the time to come: Or else if the Lord pleaseth to put an end to my worldly being now, that He would mercifully accept of my Death-Bed Repentance, and perform that Promise that He hath been pleased to make, That at what time soever a Sinner doth Repent, He would receive him. *Put up these Prayers, most dear Doctor, to Almighty God for your most Obedient and Languishing Servant.*

Rochester.

He

He told me when I saw him, That he hoped I would come to him upon that general Insinuation of the desire he had of my Company; and he was loth to write more plainly: not knowing whether I could easily spare so much time. I told him, That on the other hand, I looked on it as a presumption to come so far, when he was in such excellent hands; and though perhaps the freedom formerly between us, might have excused it with those to whom it was known; yet it might have the appearance of so much Vanity, to such as were strangers to it; So that till I received his Letter, I did not think it convenient to come to him: And then not hearing that there was any danger of a sudden change, I delayed going to him till the Twentieth of *July*. At my coming to his House an accident fell out not worth mentioning, but that some have made a story of it. His Servant being a *French-man* carried up my Name wrong, so that he mistook it for another, who had sent to him, that he would undertake his Cure, and he being resolved not to meddle with him, did not care to see him: This mistake lasted some hours, with which I was the better contented, because he was not then in such a condition, that my being about him could have been of any use to him: for that Night was like to have been his last. He had a *Convulsion-Fit*, and raved; but *Opiates* being given him, after some hours rest, his raving left him so entirely, that it never again returned to him.

I cannot easily express the Transport he was in, when he awoke and saw me by him: He brake out in the tendrest Expressions concerning my kindness in coming so far to see *such a One*, using terms of great abhorrence concerning himself, which I forbear to relate. He told me, as his strength served him at several snatches, for he was then so low, that he could not hold up discourse long at once, what sense he had of his past life; what sad apprehension for having so offended his Maker, and dishonoured his Redeemer: What Horrours he had gone through, and how much his Mind was turned to call on God, and on his Crucified Saviour: So that he hoped he should obtain Mercy, for he believed he had sincerely repented; and had now a calm in his Mind after that storm that he had been in for some Weeks. He had strong Apprehen-

sions and Perswasions of his admittance to Heaven: of which he spake once not without some extraordinary Emotion. It was indeed the only time that he spake with any great warmth to me: For his Spirits were then low, and so far spent, that though those about him told me, He had expressed formerly great fervour in his Devotions; Yet Nature was so much sunk, that these were in a great measure fallen off. But he made me pray often with him; and spoke of his Conversion to God as a thing now grown up in him to a setled and calm serenity. He was very anxious to know my Opinion of a Death-Bed Repentance. I told him, That before I gave any Resolution in that, it would be convenient that I should be acquainted more particularly with the Circumstances and Progress of his Repentance.

Upon this he satisfied me in many particulars. He said, He was now perswaded both of the truth of *Christianity*, and of the power of inward Grace, of which he gave me this strange account. He said, Mr. *Parsons* in order to his Conviction, read to him the 53. *Chapter* of the Prophesie of *Isaiah*, and compared *that* with the History of our Saviour's Passion, that he might there see a Prophesie concerning it, written many Ages before it was done; which the *Jews* that blasphemed Jesus Christ still kept in their hands, as a Book divinely inspired. He said to me, *That as he heard it read, he felt an inward force upon him, which did so enlighten his Mind, and convince him, that he could resist it no longer: For the words had an authority which did shoot like Raies or Beams in his Mind; So that he was not only convinced by the Reasonings he had about it, which satisfied his Understanding, but by a power which did so effectually constrain him, that he did ever after as firmly believe in his Saviour, as if he had seen him in the Clouds.* He had made it be read so often to him, that he had got it by heart: and went through a great part of it in Discourse with me, with a sort of heavenly Pleasure, giving me his Reflections on it. Some few I remember, *Who hath believed our Report? Here,* he said, *was foretold the Opposition the Gospel was to meet with from such Wretches as he was. He hath no Form nor Comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* On this he said, *The*

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meanness of his appearance and Person has made vain and foolish people disparage Him, because he came not in such a Fools Coat as they delight in. What he said on the other parts I do not well remember: and indeed I was so affected with what he said then to me, that the general transport I was under during the whole Discourse, made me less capable to remember these Particulars, as I wish I had done.

He told me, That he had thereupon received the Sacrament with great satisfaction, and that was encreased by the pleasure he had in his Ladies receiving it with him: who had been for some years misled into the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, and he himself had been not a little Instrumental in procuring it, as he freely acknowledged. So that it was one of the joyfullest things that befel him in his Sickness, that he had seen that Mischief removed, in which he had so great a Hand: and during his whole Sickness, he expressed so much tenderness and true kindness to his Lady, that as it easily defaced the remembrance of every thing wherein he had been in fault formerly, so it drew from her the most passionate care and concern for him that was possible: which indeed deserves a higher Character than is decent to give of a Person yet alive. But I shall confine my Discourse to the Dead.

He told me, He had overcome all his Resentments to all the World; So that he bore ill will to no Person, nor hated any upon personal accounts. He had given a true state of his Debts, and had ordered to pay them all, as far as his Estate that was not settled, could go: and was confident that if all that was owing to him were paid to his Executors, his Creditors would be all satisfied. He said, He found his Mind now possessed with another sense of things, than ever he had formerly: He did not repine under all his pain, and in one of the sharpest Fits he was under while I was with him; He said, *He did willingly submit*; and looking up to Heaven, said, *God's holy Will be done, I bless Him for all He does to me.* He professed he was contented either to die or live, as should please God: And though it was a foolish thing for a man to pretend to choose, Whether he would die or live, yet he wished rather to die. He knew he could never be so well, that life should

be comfortable to him. He was confident he should be happy if he died, but he feared if he lived he might Relapse: And then said he to me, *In what a condition shall I be, if I Relapse after all this?* But, he said, *he trusted in the Grace and Goodness of God, and was resolved to avoid all those Temptations, that Course of Life, and Company, that was likely to insnare him: and he desired to live on no other account, but that he might by the change of his Manners some way take off the high Scandal his former Behaviour had given.* All these things at several times I had from him, besides some Messages which very well became a dying Penitent to some of his former Friends, and a Charge to publish any thing concerning him, that might be a means to reclaim others. *Praying God, that as his life had done much hurt, so his death might do some good.*

Having understood all these things from him, and being pressed to give him my Opinion plainly about his Eternal State; I told him, That though the Promises of the Gospel did all depend upon a real change of Heart and Life, as the indispensable condition upon which they were made; and that it was scarce possible to know certainly whether our Hearts are changed, unless it appeared in our lives; and the Repentance of most dying men, being like the howlings of condemned Prisoners for Pardon, which flowed from no sense of their Crimes, but from the horrour of approaching Death; there was little reason to encourage any to hope much from such Sorrowings: Yet certainly if the Mind of a Sinner, even on a Death-Bed, be truly renewed and turned to God, so great is His Mercy, that He will receive him, even in that extremity. He said, *He was sure his Mind was entirely turned, and though Horrour had given him his first awaking, yet that was now grown up into a setled Faith and Conversion.*

There is but one prejudice lies against all this, to defeat the good Ends of Divine Providence by it upon others, as well as on himself: and that is that it was a part of his Disease, and that the lowness of his Spirits made such an alteration in him, that he was not what he had formerly been: and this some have carried so far as to say, That he died mad: These Reports are raised by those who are unwilling that the last Thoughts or Words of a Person,

Perſon, every way ſo extraordinary, ſhould have any effect either on themſelves or others: And it is to be fear'd, that ſome may have ſo far ſeared their Conſciences, and exceeded the common Meaſures of Sin and Infidelity, that neither this Teſtimony, nor one coming from the Dead, would ſignifie much towards their Conviction. That this Lord was either mad or ſtupid, is a thing ſo notoriouſly untrue, that it is the greateſt Impudence for any that were about him to Report it; and a very unreaſonable Credulity in others to believe it. All the while I was with him, after he had ſlept out the diſorders of the Fit he was in the firſt Night, he was not only without Ravings; but had a clearneſs in his Thoughts, in his Memory, in his reflections on Things and Perſons, far beyond what I ever ſaw in a Perſon ſo low in his ſtrength. He was not able to hold out long in Diſcourſe, for his Spirits failed: but once for half an hour, and often for a quarter of an hour, after he awakened, he had a Vivacity in his Diſcourſe that was extraordinary, and in all things like himſelf. He called often for his Children, his Son the now Earl of *Rocheſter*, and his three Daughters, and ſpake to them with a ſenſe and feeling that cannot be expreſſed in Writing. He called me once to look on them all, and ſaid, *See how Good God has been to me, in giving me ſo many Bleſſings, and I have carried my ſelf to Him like an ungracious and unthankful Dog.* He once talked a great deal to me of Publick Affairs, and of many Perſons and things, with the ſame clearneſs of thought and expreſſion, that he had ever done before. So that by no ſign, but his Weakneſs of Body, and giving over Diſcourſe ſo ſoon, could I perceive a difference between what his Parts formerly were, and what they were then.

And that wherein the preſence of his Mind appeared moſt, was in the total change of an ill habit grown ſo much upon him, that he could hardly govern himſelf, when he was any ways heated, three Minutes without falling into it; I mean *Swearing*. He had acknowledged to me the former Winter, that he abhorred it as a baſe and indecent thing, and had ſet himſelf much to break it off: but he confeſſed that he was ſo over-power'd by that ill Cuſtom, that he could

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not speak with any warmth, without repeated Oaths, which, upon any sort of provocation, came almost naturally from him: But in his last Remorses this did so sensibly affect him, that by a resolute and constant watchfulness, the habit of it was perfectly master'd; So that upon the returns of pain which were very severe and frequent upon him, the last day I was with him; or upon such displeasures as people sick or in pain are apt to take of a sudden at those about them; On all these Occasions he never swore an Oath all the while I was there.

Once he was offended with the delay of one that he thought made not haste enough, with somewhat he called for, and said in a little heat, *That damn'd Fellow*: Soon after I told him, I was glad to find his Style so reformed, and that he had so entirely overcome that ill habit of Swearing; Only that word of calling any *damn'd*, which had returned upon him, was not decent. His Answer was, *Oh that Language of Fiends which was so familiar to me, hangs yet about me: Sure none has deserved more to be damned than I have done.* And after he had humbly asked God Pardon for it, he desired me to call the Person to him, that he might ask him forgiveness: But I told him that was needless, for he had said it of one that did not hear it, and so could not be offended by it.

In this disposition of Mind did he continue all the while I was with him, four days together; He was then brought so low that all hope of Recovery was gone. Much purulent matter came from him with his Urine, which he passed always with some pain; But one day with unexpressible torment: Yet he bore it decently, without breaking out into Repinings, or impatient Complaints. He imagined he had a Stone in his Passage, but it being searched, none was found. The whole substance of his Body was drained by the Ulcer, and nothing was left but Skin and Bone: and by lying much on his Back, the parts there began to mortifie. But he had been formerly so low, that he seemed as much past all hopes of life as now; which made him one Morning after a full and sweet Nights rest procured by *Laudanum*, given him without his knowledge, to fancy it was an effort of Nature, and to begin to entertain some hopes of Recovery: For he said, He felt himself perfectly

well,

well, and that he had nothing ailing him, but an extream weakneſs, which might go off in time: and then he entertained me with the Scheme he had laid down for the reſt of his life, how retired, how ſtrict, and how ſtudious he intended to be: But this was ſoon over, for he quickly felt that it was only the effect of a good ſleep, and that he was ſtill in a very deſperate ſtate.

I thought to have left him on *Friday*, but not without ſome Paſſion, he deſired me to ſtay that day: there appeared no ſymptom of preſent death; and a Worthy Phyſitian then with him, told me, That though he was ſo low that an accident might carry him away on a ſuddain; Yet without that, he thought he might live yet ſome Weeks. So on *Saturday* at Four of the Clock in the Morning I left him, being the 24*th* of *July*. But I durſt not take leave of him; for he had expreſſed ſo great an unwillingneſs to part with me the day before, that if I had not preſently yielded to one days ſtay, it was like to have given him ſome trouble, therefore I thought it better to leave him without any Formality. Some hours after he asked for me, and when it was told him, I was gone, he ſeem'd to be troubled, and ſaid, *Has my Friend left me, then I ſhall die ſhortly*. After that he ſpake but once or twice till he died: He lay much ſilent: Once they heard him praying very devoutly. And on *Monday* about Two of the Clock in the Morning, he died, without any *Convulſion*, or ſo much as a groan.

THE

THE CONCLUSION.

THus he lived, and thus he died in the Three and Thirtieth Year of his Age. Nature had fitted him for great things, and his Knowledge and Obſervation qualify'd him to have been one of the moſt extraordinary Men, not only of his Nation, but of the Age he lived in; And I do verily believe, that if God had thought fit to have continued him longer in the World, he had been the Wonder and Delight of all that knew him. But the infinitely Wiſe God knew better what was fit for him, and what the Age deſerved. For men who have ſo caſt off all ſenſe of God and Religion, deſerve not ſo ſignal a Bleſſing, as the Example and Conviction which the reſt of his life might have given them. And I am apt to think that the Divine Goodneſs took pity on him, and ſeeing the ſincerity of his Repentance, would try and venture him no more in Circumſtances of Temptation, perhaps too hard for Humane Frailty. Now he is at reſt, and I am very confident enjoys the Fruits of his late, but ſincere Repentance. But ſuch as live, and ſtill go on in their Sins and Impieties, and will not be awakened neither by this, nor the other Allarms that are about their Ears, are, it ſeems, given up by God to a judicial Hardneſs and Impenitency.

Here is a publick Inſtance of One who lived of their Side, but could not die of it: And though none of all our Libertines underſtood better than he, the ſecret Myſteries of Sin, had more ſtudied every thing that could ſupport a man in it, and had more reſiſted all external means of Conviction than he had done; Yet when the hand of God inwardly touched him, he could no longer *kick againſt thoſe Pricks*, but *humbled himſelf under that Mighty Hand*, and as he uſed often to ſay in his Prayers, *He who had ſo often denied Him, found then no other Shelter, but his Mercies and Compaſſions.*

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I have written this Account with all the tenderneſs and caution I could uſe, and in whatſoever I may have failed, I have been ſtrict in the truth of what I have related, remembring that of *Job*, *Will ye lie for God?* Religion has Strength and Evidence enough in it ſelf, and needs no Support from Lies, and made Stories. I do not pretend to have given the formal words that he ſaid, though I have done that where I could remember them. But I have written this with the ſame Sincerity, that I would have done, had I known I had been to die immediately after I had finiſhed it. I did not take Notes of our Diſcourſes laſt Winter after we parted; ſo I may have perhaps in the ſetting out of my Anſwers to him, have enlarged on ſeveral things both more fully and more regularly, than I could ſay them in ſuch free Diſcourſes as we had. I am not ſo ſure of all I ſet down as ſaid by me, as I am of all ſaid by him to me. But yet the ſubſtance of the greateſt part, even of that, is the ſame.

It remains that I humbly and earneſtly beſeech all that ſhall take this Book in their hands, that they will conſider it entirely: and not wreſt ſome parts to an ill intention. God, the Searcher of Hearts, knows with what Fidelity I have writ it: But if any will drink up only the Poiſon that may be in it, without taking alſo the Antidote here given to thoſe ill Principles; or conſidering the ſenſe that this great Perſon had of them, when he reflected ſeriouſly on them; and will rather confirm themſelves in their ill ways, by the Scruples and Objections which I ſet down, than be edified by the other parts of it; As I will look on it as a great Infelicity, that I ſhould have ſaid any thing that may ſtrengthen them in their Impieties; So the ſincerity of my Intentions will, I doubt not, excuſe me at his hands, to whom I offer up this ſmall Service.

I have now performed, in the beſt manner I could, what was left on me by this Noble Lord, and have done with the part of an Hiſtorian. I ſhall in the next place ſay ſomewhat as a Divine. So extraordinary a Text does almoſt force a Sermon, though it is plain enough it ſelf, and ſpeaks with ſo loud a Voice, that thoſe who are not awakened by it, will perhaps conſider nothing that I

can say. If our Libertines will become so far sober as to examine their former Course of Life, with that disingagement and impartiality, which they must acknowledge a wise man ought to use in things of greatest Consequence, and ballance the Account of what they have got by their Debaucheries, with the Mischiefs they have brought on themselves and others by them, they will soon see what a mad Bargain they have made. Some Diversion, Mirth, and Pleasure is all they can promise themselves; but to obtain this, how many Evils are they to suffer? how have many wasted their strength, brought many Diseases on their Bodies, and precipitated their Age in the pursuit of those things? and as they bring old Age early on themselves, so it becomes a miserable state of life to the greatest part of them; *Gouts, Stranguries,* and other Infirmities, being severe Reckonings for their past Follies; not to mention the more loathsome Diseases, with their no less loathsome and troublesome Cures, which they must often go through, who deliver themselves up to forbidden Pleasure. Many are disfigur'd beside, with the marks of their Intemperance and Lewdness, and which is yet sadder, an Infection is derived oftentimes on their Innocent, but unhappy Issue, who being descended from so vitiated an Original, suffer for their Excesses. Their Fortunes are profusely wasted, both by their neglect of their Affairs, they being so buried in Vice, that they cannot employ either their Time or Spirits, so much exhausted by Intemperance, to consider them; and by that Prodigal Expence which their Lusts put them upon. They suffer no less in their Credit, the chief mean to recover an intangled Estate; for that irregular Expence forceth them to so many mean shifts, makes them so often false to all their Promises and Resolutions, that they must needs feel how much they have lost, that which a Gentleman, and Men of ingenuous tempers do sometimes prefer even to life it self, their Honour and Reputation. Nor do they suffer less in the Nobler powers of their Minds, which, by a long course of such dissolute Practices, come to sink and degenerate so far, that not a few, whose first Blossoms gave the most promising Hopes, have so wither'd, as to become incapable of great and generous Undertakings, and to be disabled to every thing, but

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to wallow like Swine in the filth of Senſuality, their Spirits being diſſipated, and their Minds ſo nummed, as to be wholly unfit for buſineſs, and even indiſpoſed to think.

That this dear price ſhould be paid for a little wild Mirth, or groſs and corporal Pleaſure, is a thing of ſuch imparalelled Folly, that if there were not too many ſuch Inſtances before us, it might ſeem incredible. To all this we muſt add the Horrours that their ill Actions raiſe in them, and the hard ſhifts they are put to to ſtave off theſe, either by being perpetually drunk or mad, or by an habitual diſuſe of thinking and reflecting on their Actions, and (if theſe Arts will not perfectly quiet them) by taking Sanctuary in ſuch Atheiſtical Principles as may at leaſt mitigate the ſowrneſs of their thoughts, though they cannot abſolutely ſettle their Minds.

If the ſtate of Mankind and Humane Societies are conſidered, what Miſchiefs can be equal to thoſe which follow theſe Courſes. Such Perſons are a Plague where ever they come, they can neither be truſted nor beloved, having caſt off both Truth and Goodneſs, which procure Confidence and attract Love: they corrupt ſome by their ill Practices, and do irreparable Injuries to the reſt; they run great Hazards, and put themſelves to much trouble, and all this to do what is in their power to make Damnation as ſure to themſelves as poſſibly they can. What Influence this has on the whole Nation is but too viſible; How the Bonds of Nature, Wedlock, and all other Relations are quite broken. Vertue is thought an Antick Piece of Formality, and Religion the effect of Cowardiſe or Knavery: Theſe are the Men that would Reform the World, by bringing it under a new Syſtem of Intellectual and Moral Principles, but bate them a few bold and lewd Jeſts, what have they ever done, or deſigned to do, to make them be remembred, except it be with deteſtation? They are the Scorn of the preſent Age, and their Names muſt rot in the next. Here they have before them an Inſtance of one who was deeply corrupted with the Contagion which he firſt derived from Others, but unhappily heightened it much himſelf. He was a Maſter indeed, and not a bare trifler with Wit, as ſome of theſe are who repeat,

and that but ſcurvily, what they may have heard from him or ſome others, and with Impudence and Laughter will face the World down, as if they were to teach it Wiſdom; who, God knows, cannot follow one Thought a ſtep further than as they have conned it; and take from them their borrow'd Wit and their mimical Humour, and they will preſently appear what they indeed are, the leaſt and loweſt of Men.

If they will, or if they can think a little, I wiſh they would conſider that by their own Principles, they cannot be ſure that Religion is only a Contrivance, all that they pretend to is only to weaken ſome Arguments that are brought for it: but they have not Brow enough to ſay, They can prove that their own Principles are true. So that at moſt they bring their Cauſe no higher, than that it is poſſible *Religion* may not be true. But ſtill it is poſſible it may be true, and they have no ſhame left that will deny that it is alſo probable it may be true; and if ſo, then what mad Men are they who run ſo great a hazard for nothing? By their own Confeſſion it may be there is a God, a Judgment, and a Life to come; and if ſo, then He that believes theſe things, and lives according to them, as he enjoys a long courſe of Health and quiet of Mind, an innocent reliſh of many true Pleaſures, and the Serenities which Vertue raiſes in him, with the good Will and Friendſhip which it procures him from others; So when he dies, if theſe things prove Miſtakes, he does not out-live his Error, nor ſhall it afterwards raiſe trouble or diſquiet in him if he then ceaſes to be: But if theſe things be true, he ſhall be infinitely happy in that State, where his preſent ſmall Services ſhall be ſo exceſſively rewarded. The *Libertines* on the other ſide, as they know they muſt die, ſo the thoughts of Death muſt be always Melancholy to them, they can have no pleaſant view of that which yet they know cannot be very far from them: The leaſt painful *Idea* they can have of it is, that it is an extinction and ceaſing to be, but they are not ſure even of that. Some ſecret Whiſpers within make them, whether they will or not, tremble at the Apprehenſions of another State; neither their Tinſel-Wit, nor ſuperficial Learning, nor their impotent Aſſaults upon the

the weak ſide as they think of Religion, nor the boldeſt Notions of Impiety, will hold them up then. Of all which I now preſent ſo lively an *Inſtance*, as perhaps Hiſtory can ſcarce parallel.

Here were parts ſo exalted by Nature, and improved by Study, and yet ſo corrupted and debaſed by Irreligion and Vice, that he who was made to be one of the Glories of his Age was become a Proverb, and if his Repentance had not interpoſed, would have been one of the greateſt Reproaches of it. He knew well the ſmall ſtrength of that weak Cauſe, and at firſt deſpiſed, but afterwards abhorred it. He felt the Miſchiefs, and ſaw the madneſs of it; and therefore though he lived to the ſcandal of many, he died as much to the Edification of all thoſe who ſaw him; and becauſe they were but a ſmall number, he deſired that he might even when dead yet ſpeak. He was willing nothing ſhould be concealed that might caſt Reproach on himſelf, and on Sin, and offer up Glory to God and Religion. So that though he lived a hainous Sinner, yet he died a moſt exemplary Penitent.

It would be a vain and ridiculous Inference, for any from hence to draw Arguments about the abſtruſe Secrets of Predeſtination; and to conclude that if they are of the number of the Elect, they may live as they will, and that Divine Grace will at ſome time or other violently conſtrain them, and irreſiſtably work upon them. But as St. *Paul* was called to that Eminent Service for which he was appointed, in ſo ſtupendious a manner, as is no warrant for others to expect ſuch a Vocation; So if upon ſome ſignal Occaſions ſuch Converſions fall out, which, how far they are ſhort of Miracles, I ſhall not determine, it is not only a vain but a pernicious Imagination, for any to go on in their ill ways, upon a fond Conceit and Expectation that the like will befal them: For whatſoever Gods extraordinary dealings with ſome may be, We are ſure His common way of Working is by offering theſe things to our rational Faculties, which, by the aſſiſtances of His Grace, if we improve them all we can, ſhall be certainly effectual for our Reformation; and if we neglect or abuſe theſe, We put our ſelves beyond the common Methods of God's Mercy, and have no reaſon to expect that Wonders ſhould be wrought for our Conviction;

viction; which though they sometimes happen, that they may give an effectual Allarm for the awaking of others, yet it would destroy the whole design of Religion, if men should depend upon or look for such an extraordinary and forcible Operation of God's Grace.

And I hope that those who have had some sharp Reflections on their past Life, so as to be resolved to forsake their ill Courses, will not take the least encouragement to themselves in that desperate and unreasonable Resolution of putting off their Repentance till they can sin no longer, from the hopes I have express'd of this Lords obtaining Mercy at the last; and from thence presume that they also shall be received, when they turn to God on their Death-Beds: For what Mercy soever God may shew to such as really were never inwardly touched before that time; Yet there is no reason to think that those who have dealt so disingenuously with God and their own Souls, as designedly to put off their turning to Him, upon such Considerations, should be then accepted with Him. They may die suddenly, or by a Disease that may so disorder their Understandings, that they shall not be in any capacity of Reflecting on their past Lives. The inward Conversion of our Minds is not so in our power, that it can be effected without Divine Grace assisting. And there is no reason for those who have neglected these Assistances all their Lives, to expect them in so extraordinary manner at their Death. Nor can one, especially in a Sickness, that is quick and critical, be able to do those things that are often indispensably necessary to make his Repentance compleat: And even in a longer Disease, in which there are larger Opportunities for these things; Yet there is great Reason to doubt of a Repentance begun and kept up meerly by Terrour, and not from any ingenuous Principle. In which, though I will not take on me to limit the Mercies of God, which are boundless; Yet this must be confessed, that to delay Repentance, with such a design, is to put the greatest Concernment we have upon the most dangerous and desperate Issue that is possible.

But they that will still go on in their Sins, and be so partial to them,

them, as to uſe all endeavours to ſtrengthen themſelves in their evil Courſe, even by theſe very things which the Providence of God ſets before them, for the caſting down of theſe ſtrong holds of Sin: What is to be ſaid to ſuch: it is to be feared, that if they obſtinately perſiſt, they will by degrees come within that Curſe, *He that is Unjuſt, let him be Unjuſt ſtill: and he that is Filthy, let him be Filthy ſtill. But if our Goſpel is hid, it is hid to them that are loſt, in whom the god of this World hath blinded the Minds of them which believe not, leaſt the Light of the Glorious Goſpel of Chriſt, who is the Image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them.*

ADVERTISEMENT.

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FINIS.